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NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT MARCH 2024 – JUNE 2024

Sisters, Brothers and Friends:

What an amazing spring it has been.

Division conventions were held across the country, bringing with them renewed vigour to continue the important work our union must do to defend workers' rights, fight for public services, and protect good jobs.

As in past years, when I joined CUPE members at their annual conventions, I was proud of the passion our members bring as they set priorities and ready themselves with strength and solidarity for what's to come.

My message at our division conventions was clear – we must stand united in the face of divisive, hate-filled politics from the political right. With the exception of British Columbia and Manitoba, we still battle right-wing governments across the country to ensure that public services remain public, and that workers' rights aren't trampled on.

We are living in trying times. European elections have shown that the far right continues to enjoy a new resurgence. Elections in India have returned the billionaire-friendly Prime Minister Modi to power, albeit without a majority. The war in Ukraine rages on. International efforts to negotiate a pandemic preparedness treaty, which would result in meaningful steps to protect health care workers, have hit roadblocks.

The humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza also continues to unfold. CUPE members across Canada have been taking action through peaceful protest, especially on university campuses, for justice and peace. I have been proud to take our message of solidarity with Palestinians to division conventions across the country. Our members must remain vigilant as anti-Semitism, anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia reach new heights here at home, threatening the safety of our members, and undermining union solidarity.

MARK HANCOCK

National President/Président national

CANDACE RENNICK

National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorière nationale

PATRICK GLOUTNEY, FRED HAHN, JUDY HENLEY, SHERRY HILLIER, KAREN RANALLETTA

General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

With CUPE now standing at three quarters of a million strong, there is nothing we can't achieve if we continue to rally together. Our leaders, members, and staff across Canada deserve recognition for the fights they take on every day. We must celebrate and acknowledge the tireless work they put in to make our communities a better place to work, learn, play, and live.

We know that who's in power has a huge impact on the sanctity of our public services, and the respect of our charter rights. We've already seen some major legislative wins for the labour movement – and for Canada – this year. CUPE leaders and activists across the country continue to put pressure on the government to protect our bargaining power and defend against privatization.

Joint efforts between the NDP, CUPE, and the broader labour movement brought long-awaited legislative change late this spring. Federal anti-scab legislation passed third reading on May 27, 2024, in the House of Commons. This substantial win will advance labour rights and will force employers in federally regulated sectors to think twice when bargaining, as it will now be illegal to hire replacement workers to do the jobs of those striking for better wages, benefits, and working conditions.

We can't forget that Pierre Poilievre and his Conservatives voted against this legislation eight times in the past, and only voted in favour this time in hopes of looking like a friend of labour, rather than the foe he's proven to be on countless other occasions. Anti-scab legislation in Quebec and British Columbia has proven to reduce the length and frequency of strikes and lockouts and CUPE is committed to continue the fight for justice to ban scab workers from coast to coast to coast.

We also saw the historic Pharmacare bill pass the House of Commons on June 3, 2024. The Pharmacare Act creates a framework for a universal, single-payer Pharmacare plan with immediate coverage of diabetes and contraceptive medications. Again, the Conservatives voted against Pharmacare, choosing the side of Big Pharma over ordinary Canadians.

Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

We continue to work tirelessly to build labour solidarity through the CLC and we remain at the forefront of the house of labour. CUPE was proud to support the inclusion of the first ever professional sports association in the house of labour with the welcoming of the Canadian Football League Players Association.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)

Our municipal members across the country saw CUPE's presence at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Conference this year in Calgary. We brought a strong message of the importance of health and safety to the thousands of municipal councillors and mayors gathered in Alberta.

We hosted a session titled “Time for solutions: Prioritizing health and safety in the workplace,” which examined the health and safety challenges facing municipal workers today and outlined strategies for creating a healthier and safer workplace for all.

Our tradeshow booth, as always, was a hotspot of activity. Our research and communications staff, along with NEB members, had hundreds of conversations about the dangers of P3s and the importance of protecting public services.

I look forward to seeing CUPE members at summer barbecues, events and, of course, picket lines, across the country as we continue our work of building the country’s largest and strongest union.

Collective Bargaining/Strikes/Lockouts

PROVINCE	LOCAL	EMPLOYER	# OF MEMBERS	STRIKE BEGAN	DURATION
Quebec	CUPE 2614	Société des arrimeurs de Québec (SAQ)	81	Locked out September 15, 2022	Ongoing
Quebec	CUPE 2815	Videotron	214	Locked out, October 30, 2023	Ongoing
Quebec	CUPE 2804	Municipalité de Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac	21	June 4 2024	2 days
Quebec	CUPE 1962	Municipalité de Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac	53	June 20, 2024	4 days
Quebec	CUPE 306	City of Longueuil	1,200	March 13 and 14, 2024 April 2 and 5, 2024	4 days
Ontario	CUPE 1490	Town of Black River-Matheson	14	Locked out/ strike, October 15, 2023	Ratified May 23, 2024
Ontario	CUPE 3903	York University	3,000	Strike commenced February 26, 2024	Ratified agreement April 19, 2024
Manitoba	CUPE 4376	Ten Ten Sinclair Housing Inc.	170	March 6, 2024	Ratified agreement March 22, 2024
Manitoba	CUPE 2348	Ten Ten Sinclair Housing Inc.	4	March 6, 2024	Ratified agreement March 22, 2024

CUPE 2614

On September 15, 2022, more than 550 days ago, the Port of Quebec locked out 81 members of CUPE 2614. These longshore workers joined members of CUPE 2815 on Parliament Hill to salute the federal government's passage at third reading of Bill C-58 which prohibits the use of replacement workers under federal jurisdiction across Canada, including in Quebec. Anti-scab legislation is more necessary than ever, and it can't come soon enough. CUPE 2614 issues would have been settled long ago if anti-scab legislation was already a part of the Canada Labor Code. The employer continues to use replacement workers, which would be illegal under provincial jurisdiction and will be illegal when Bill C-58 comes into force.

In the meantime, CUPE 2614 continues to demand that the employer engage and come to the bargaining table. CUPE 2614 members have several concerns about health and safety within their workplace and have undertaken their due diligence in raising their voices about the dangerous conditions of the wharves and the inaction on the part of the port authorities and the federal government towards fixing them. CUPE 2614 members are also advocating for predictable work schedules that will allow for family life and putting an end to 76 hours or more scheduled work weeks.

CUPE 2815

On October 10, 2023, CUPE 2815 members who work at Videotron in Gatineau, Quebec, overwhelmingly rejected their employer's substandard offer. Instead of returning to the table to negotiate a fair contract, the employer locked the 214 workers out on October 30.

These members remain united, while the employer continues to insist that the local accept a concession that would allow unlimited contracting-out of work which would allow work to be outsourced overseas. CUPE 2815 is adamant that jobs need to be created and remain within the community. Members have been without a contract since August 31, 2020. Because Bill C-58 is not yet in force, Videotron is using replacement workers, many of whom work abroad for poverty wages.

CUPE 1962 and CUPE 2804

21 members of CUPE 2804, inside workers from the Ville de Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac were on strike June 4 and 5. The 53 outside worker in the same municipality, members of CUPE 1962, plan to strike from June 20 to 24. Both groups are bargaining for wage increases on par with those in surrounding communities and fighting off employer concessions around paid March break for crossing guards and a weekend schedule for library workers.

CUPE 306

1,200 inside workers from the Ville de Longueuil were on strike on March 13 and 14 and April 2 to 5. Members are fighting for a fair contract with wage increases comparable to those granted to other groups of employees in recent years. Remote work and improvements for precarious workers are also priority issues in this round of bargaining.

CUPE 1490

Fourteen members of CUPE 1490, who are municipal workers at the Township of Black River-Matheson in Northern Ontario, have ratified a new collective agreement on May 23, 2024, after ten long months on the picket line.

Members were successful in achieving an agreement that fought off the employer's concessions, secured substantial wage increases for all members and a guarantee against reprisals as the members return to the workplace.

Numerous points of pressure have been applied over the months of this fight including solidarity rallies, secondary pickets, filings in court and at the labour board, and international pressure coordinated through Public Service International. The dysfunction within the Town Council ultimately led to the province's unprecedented decision to disband the council and declare new elections which will take place in August.

CUPE 3903

After seven weeks on the picket line, 3,000 contract instructors, teaching assistants, and graduate assistants at York University ratified a new collective agreement on April 19, 2024. The new agreement secured retroactive increases for the period of wage restraint imposed by Bill 124 as well as a new fund to support racialized members experiencing racial discrimination, harassment and violence, a new mentoring fund and an increase to the length of paid parental leave for non-pregnant and adoptive parents.

CUPE 2348 and CUPE 4376

Approximately 160 health care workers at Ten Ten Sinclair Inc. ratified a new collective agreement on March 22, 2024, after 17 days on the picket line. The new agreement includes wage increases and improvements to the wage grid, a long-service premium, double overtime rates and significantly increased shift premiums.

Bargaining

Over 8,000 members of CUPE 3902 and CUPE 3261 at the University of Toronto engaged in a historic round of bargaining that saw both locals coordinate their bargaining across five separate bargaining units. They were also joined in coordination and organizing efforts by CUPE 1320.

Historically the parties would negotiate separately, allowing the employer to play locals off against each other by relying on a “pattern” in bargaining. This round of bargaining saw coordination not only among the units of each local – but across both locals as well. This represents a historic first for bargaining coordination between academic and support staff at universities in Ontario.

The coordination efforts, and the months of mobilization and engagement that led up to the bargaining deadline, resulted in significant monetary gains – including compensation for the Bill 124 period of wage restraint. These gains were also helpful in setting the stage for deals at the University of Guelph (CUPE 3913) and the University of Ottawa (CUPE 2626) as well as the eventual resolution of the CUPE 3903 strike at York University.

CUPE 1949 achieved a progressive and precedent-setting collective agreement with the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission that bolsters the working conditions for members delivering services to some of Saskatchewan’s most vulnerable people.

The agreement recognizes the importance of Legal Aid staff and creates real incentives for them to continue doing their work including market adjustments to being lawyers and articling students closer to the wages of Government of Saskatchewan Crown Prosecutors and career enhancement initiatives for administrative staff. The agreement also expands vacation, provides benefits for temporary employees and establishes an EAP program for all staff.

Employees of Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), represented by CUPE 1294, ratified a collective agreement that brings major improvements to precarious employees’ working conditions: paid vacations, enhancements to group insurance, carryover of unused sick leave and wage harmonization. Other significant progress was made for the membership with respect to scheduling flexibility, overtime increases and premiums, and recognition of in-person work. This means that employees who do not work remotely will be entitled to a four-day work week or an annual lump sum of \$500. In addition, the working conditions of postdoctoral interns, who have now been included in the scope of the bargaining unit, will be covered in the collective agreement for the very first time.

CUPE 5510 members working at the City of Granby signed a new collective agreement with significant improvements. The five-year deal, which runs from 2023 to 2027, includes a market adjustment of 6.42%, and general increases as follows: in 2023 and 2024, 3%; in 2025, a consumer price index (CPI)-based adjustment of a minimum 2% and a maximum of 3%; and in 2026 and 2027, a minimum CPI of 2.5% and a maximum of 3.25%. Other gains include a phased retirement program, the addition of deferred salary leave and two floating holidays, and an increase in the number of days of vacation and union book-off.

Members of CUPE 5021 at Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries voted 89% in favour of ratifying revisions to their collective agreement which included between 15-25% in general wage adjustments and special wage or market adjustments as well as an added longevity step. They also received increases to shift premiums and call out increases and a signing bonus.

Due to five other union groups settling prior to CUPE 5021, with the inclusion of a “me too” provision for anything additional CUPE might gain, the solidarity of CUPE members in resisting the government mandate resulted in our members insisting on further gains contained in the collective agreements of other unions being extended to CUPE (we have now coined this the “reverse me too.”) This has resulted in CUPE negotiating the best agreement among Crown Corporations to date under the new government.

Regional Updates

Maritimes Region

New Brunswick

CUPE New Brunswick’s 61st annual convention looked to the future, with over 300 delegates, guests, staff, and observers convening in Fredericton this April. CUPE’s Atlantic Maritime Indigenous Council drafted a new land acknowledgement that made its debut at the event, where members passed many key resolutions to strategize a course to counteract the Higgs government’s various challenges to pensions and labour rights. The proud memory of strong yellow fists waving through the air during the 2021 strike was honoured by a documentary about the historic labour action. Looking forward to the work ahead, CUPE members in New Brunswick will ready themselves by ramping up political action and staving off legislative threats to workers’ rights.

Our fight for retirement security in New Brunswick continues. Premier Higgs passed legislation forcing members of two CUPE locals – 2745 and 1253 – to accept shared risk pension plans over their defined benefit plans. Our legal staff have been coordinating a full-scale assault in the courts to stop this plan from moving forward. We were unsuccessful in getting an injunction against this legislation pending a Charter challenge, and have filed an appeal.

The NB government's budget released this spring brought with it much disappointment as it offered hardly anything for workers and residents in New Brunswick, with very little earmarked for health care, education, and social development. It is clear that the PC government underestimates the power of the labour movement, and thinks we will just settle for crumbs.

Our staff supported a provincial tour with the division to mobilize and engage CUPE members. With stops in every corner of the province, we saw members joining together and organizing to push back against austerity measures. We need to see real change in the legislature in the next election, and seeing the energy from this tour, I am confident that CUPE members will get involved to make sure Higgs is not re-elected.

We won a victory at the Labour and Employment Board in New Brunswick, which issued a decision in April allowing an application by CUPE 2745 to include English as an Additional Language (EAL) mentors and tutors into its bargaining unit. The board also ruled that the Province of New Brunswick, the employer, had violated the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* and needs to make good on its wage increase promise of \$3.00 per hour, retroactive to September 1, 2023, for all hours worked, and provide a letter of offer of employment for the 2023-2024 school year.

CUPE 1252, the New Brunswick Council of Hospital Unions (NBCHU), represents hospital workers. With support from CUPE staff, the NBCHU organized a televised leader's debate on health care in partnership with community television. Hundreds of people tuned in on the YouTube livestream alone to watch this innovative approach to building support for health care workers. Unsurprisingly, Premier Higgs declined the invitation to participate.

Premier Higgs continues to create a climate of uncertainty as he, like other Conservative premiers around the country, remains interested in calling a snap election. This is opportunism – plain and simple. When he mused about calling a snap election last year, it cost New Brunswickers \$1.7 million as Elections New Brunswick was forced to prepare. This is money that could have been responsibly used to invest in public services instead.

Prince Edward Island

I want to begin by congratulating Ashley Clark, President of CUPE PEI on her first Division Convention in this role. The convention took place near O'Leary at the western end of the Island in May.

PEI, like other provinces under a Conservative administration, is facing a government that wants to take public funds and hand it over to private interests instead of investing in our members who deliver the services that Islanders rely on. The challenge that our members here face is that almost none of them have the right to strike.

It has become clear that if we plan to win back strong public services on the Island, we must win back the power to withdraw our labour and demand better. CUPE staff are working hard to support our members on the Island to win the right to strike.

When talks broke down between CUPE health care workers and Health PEI in April, these invaluable workers on the Island launched a petition in support of CUPE Support Service Workers. Many workers across PEI are struggling to feed, clothe, and house themselves with only one job. CUPE 805, 1051, 1778, and 1779 met with Premier King and his Health Minister last June and told them the same thing they're telling the government now: they need better wages!

Their offer was not enough to address the impacts felt by inflation. These CUPE members are getting the message out that frontline workers should not have to work more than one job to get by.

CUPE 3373 members who work in residential group homes, care facilities, and day outreach programs have wrapped up a successful round of bargaining. Their new agreement was ratified by the membership and includes a 16% increase over 4 years.

CUPE members on the Island celebrated the life of Leo Cheverie, a library worker and beloved union activist known to so many in our CUPE family. I was pleased to be able to announce, alongside Ashley Clark, that we are naming the library in the Charlottetown Area Office after Leo.

Atlantic Region

Newfoundland and Labrador

I joined CUPE members from across Newfoundland and Labrador as they gathered in St. John's for their 50th annual convention. CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador marked a half-century of activism, enthused for 50 more years of solidarity, with inspiring speeches, commemorating retired activists, and deliberating about what priorities to set for the coming year. As always, I thank members for their hospitality, including singing me "Happy Birthday," and applaud their steadfast approach to making Newfoundland and Labrador a better place to live, learn, and work.

Members in the easternmost province have their work cut out for them, as they battle austerity, privatization, and a right-wing government led by Premier Furey. The Conservatives' budget released early this spring appeared to be offering investments in health care, public housing, and the cost of living, but CUPE activists are keeping a close eye to ensure that the money is invested in strengthening and expanding public services and not increasing profit margins of private companies. Nurses and doctors no doubt play an important role in the sector, but it's crucial that other health care workers, such as personal care attendants see measures to resolve the constant strain of understaffing.

The Furey government announced the Rental Housing Development Loan Program in this budget, as a ploy to address the housing crisis. This program's aim was to build affordable housing, yet it does little more than pad the pocketbooks of wealthy private developers as they price units based on the current rental market, which is widely unaffordable for those who need a roof to sleep under.

CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador was vocal in their disappointment with NL Health Services in Corner Brook. The employer intends on contracting out cleaning services under the guise that it needs to backfill for the current housekeeping staff's vacation time this summer. Vacations happen every year, and should come as no surprise, so the hospital should be proactive in their approach to filling staffing requirements. Recent job fairs saw over 100 applications. Health care employers need to recognize the importance of their maintenance staff, and the care they take to ensure that their facilities are properly disinfected and safe. Retention issues could be greatly alleviated if these jobs were full-time and permanent.

Nova Scotia

It was an honour to be among delegates in Halifax as CUPE Nova Scotia held its 60th anniversary convention this May. Delegates held meaningful debates and heard from wonderful guest speakers during their milestone convention, where members in the province broke attendance records from previous years. It's always wonderful to be in a room filled with CUPE members, staff, and labour leaders whose goals align to make their communities and workplaces safer, healthier, and a place where they can earn a decent living for themselves and their families.

CUPE members across Nova Scotia know that Premier Houston is no ally to the labour movement and needs to be kept on a short leash. While this Premier quietly jet sets to Spain, California, and New York on "work trips" while taxpayers' foot the bill, workers are constantly fighting for their rights against this provincial government. CUPE NS proudly applauded the Nova Scotia New Democratic Party's (NSNDP) intent to table anti-scab legislation in a firm solidarity stance with workers who are fed up with scabs doing their work, while they exercise their charter right to strike.

During the school support staff strike last year, replacement workers were hired to do bargaining unit work while our members held the line. CUPE members are tired of trying to negotiate with employers who have such blatant disregard for the important work they do in their communities. Provinces that have anti-scab legislation see fewer labour disputes, and we're behind the NSNDP's efforts to uphold our power in this step to protect workers' rights. Picket lines must never be crossed, and certainly not by replacement workers!

CUPE 5479 members who work as security workers and are responsible for the safety of most hospitals across this Atlantic province have filed for conciliation. Almost 90% of workers voted to join the CUPE family, and these vital workers have been fighting with their employer, Paladin, to achieve a first collective agreement. This employer has been throwing up roadblocks the entire way, filing labour board complaints and appealing decisions, but these new members won't give up. CUPE 5479 is adamant that they need more training before they set foot on the job if they are going to be able to adequately keep the hospitals they work in safe. They also need protective vests, gloves, and radios that actually work, and they want their pay to reflect the importance of their jobs.

CUPE 3067 members know how challenging standing up to an employer can be. These community service workers reached a tentative agreement this quarter and achieved significant gains to shift and weekend premiums, extensive workplace violence, language, paid training, and a wage adjustment. Member mobilization was key in this group's battle, and they left the table with a great win: a defined benefit pension plan! I congratulate them on a job well done.

Quebec

Last month brought both good and bad news for our members in the Quebec electricity energy sector. First, Hydro-Québec announced that it would be reviewing its wind power development strategy in order to focus on wind power production. This is something that has been privatized since 2006, following instructions from the Liberal government at the time. Locals in this sector have always denounced this privatization. Hydro-Québec must remain the owner and shareholder of its projects, in a manner that respects indigenous and local communities. Nationalizing the production and distribution of electricity has been an extraordinary lever for socio-economic development, and we owe it to ourselves to preserve it.

However instead of staying the course, the Quebec Minister of Economy, Innovation and Energy, Pierre Fitzgibbon, has tabled a bill that represents a major step backward for the people of Quebec by opening the door to privatization. Hydro-Québec's public electricity service has not only enabled unprecedented socio-economic progress in Quebec, but it has also kept rates at an acceptable level for the population and reduced inequalities. However, the new bill represents a step forward for private companies and investment funds, and a step backwards for the people of Quebec and their workers, who will lose out in the process.

Public transit is another public service that benefits the environment and reduces socio-economic inequalities. This was the topic of discussion among the members of the Conseil provincial du secteur transport terrestre (CPSTT), who met at the provincial council in Saguenay at the end of May. Public transit is just as essential as health care and education and its funding should be considered an investment, not an expense. The time has come for the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government to recognize the common consensus of all those involved: the bill cannot be paid by customers alone, as the use of public transit benefits everyone.

In addition to the vital issue of public transit funding, CPSTT members also discussed the automation and pooling of services and routes, the impact of artificial intelligence in the ground transportation sector, as well as several issues related to health and safety in the workplace.

Blue and white-collar workers of the City of Berthierville in Lanaudière have signed a new collective agreement. CUPE 4676 successfully negotiated a 4.5-day week for the entire year and an increase in the number of union leave days. In addition, the grievance procedure has been modernized, and the number of holidays and sick days has been increased. The salary increases have been set at 4.5% for 2024, 3.5% for 2025, 3% for 2026, and according to the average CPI, at a minimum of 2.5% and a maximum of 2.75% for the four following years.

After a 21-month lockout, the longshore workers of CUPE 2614 held a day of disruption in Quebec City. Hundreds of CUPE members and allies greeted Volendam cruise ship passengers at the port. They explained to port visitors and users that the current dispute is devastating dozens of Quebec families. The lack of anti-scab legislation is clearly harming these families by prolonging the labour dispute. More than a hundred cruise ships are expected this summer, and barring a negotiated settlement, CUPE 2614 is ready to welcome tourists as often as necessary.

The Syndicat des employé(e)s de TVA, CUPE 687, has launched a major campaign over the future of television and journalism in Quebec. After a very difficult last round of bargaining, a campaign has been launched to promote the work of TV professionals and news workers. The importance of a general-interest television network for the people of Quebec is undeniable. Governments must take action and change the rules to support this industry and restore a level playing field with foreign companies.

The campaign brings people together and reflects the pride of CUPE 687 members in their work, while urging the public to take action and show that they support measures designed to protect Quebec's television industry. The media placement strategy uses only Quebec and Canadian companies. The goal is to demand that the refundable tax credit for Quebec film and television productions apply to broadcasters and their employees; that the federal wage subsidy also applies to television newsroom employees; that the authorities introduce incentives to encourage broadcasters to produce their own content; that internet giants are regulated and pay their fair share to the Canadian production system and the media.

Ontario

CUPE Ontario delegates celebrated an important milestone when they convened in Toronto at the end of May to hold their 60th annual convention. It was great to be able to address those in attendance, who spent their week voting on important resolutions, hearing from passionate keynote speakers, and rallying with the Ontario Health Coalition to combat the threat of health care privatization.

Last year, Doug Ford's Conservative government introduced Bill 135 the *Convenient Care at Home Act*, which amended the *Connecting Care Act*, to establish *Ontario Health atHome*, which will operate both as a crown agent and a health service provider. The Bill will merge all Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSS) to create *Ontario Health atHome*. The changeover date is tentatively June 28.

A joint press conference was held in early May, where leaders from the Ontario Nurses Association (ONA), the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), and CUPE, called on the Ontario PCs to prioritize home and community care workers and the quality services they provide to Ontarians. Doug Ford spent the majority of the pandemic saying how important frontline workers are, but his actions speak far louder. If he truly valued the vital work these workers do, he would have at the very least consulted them before throwing the sector into mayhem with this restructuring. This right-wing Premier always prioritizes profits over patient care, and Bill 135 will add chaos to an already fragile health care system, with workers and patients paying the highest price.

Six of the eight CUPE LHIN/HCCSS collective agreements expired on March 31, 2024. Of the two outstanding locals, one will expire at the end of July, and the other at the end of December. Coordinated bargaining language was developed, with priorities on wages, wage harmonization, and employment security layoffs, to support locals in bargaining. The "Workers and Families Can't Wait" campaign was also launched to support negotiations and build our union profile in advance of potential representation votes. An agreement has now been reached on a remedy to make members whole for their losses from the unconstitutional Bill 124 that capped wages at 1%. Negotiations have also recently concluded with ratification votes expected to be conducted prior to the June 28 changeover date.

In August 2023, the provincial government announced its intention to look at voluntary mergers between Local Public Health Agencies (LPHAs), with merger proposals due by March 2024. Three mergers were confirmed: Porcupine and Timiskaming; Peterborough and Haliburton, Kawartha, and Pine Ridge District Health Units; and Hastings, Prince Edward Counties, Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox & Addington, and Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Units.

These mergers are to be underway by early 2025, and preparations have begun to support these representation votes, including the campaign launch of "Because Public Health Matters" to position CUPE as the leading voice to champion for much needed investments in public health.

Roughly 700 electrical and trades workers, members of CUPE 2, and employees of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) were without a contract since 2022. These transportation sector workers, frustrated that multiple bargaining sessions with their employer failed to produce an agreement that reflects the value of the important work they do, were ready to take job action.

Their services are crucial to ensuring the safety of transit riders. CUPE 2 members are diligent about providing quality work to ensure safe commutes to those in Canada's largest city and wanted their wages to keep up with the cost-of-living. With the lifting of the strike ban, pressure tactics were successful, and members now have an agreement that addresses the increasing cost-of-living.

Manitoba

I had the pleasure of joining activists from across Manitoba for the 60th annual CUPE Manitoba Convention from April 29 to May 3. Delegates to the convention had spirited debate on resolutions, and heard from guest speakers on panels with topics including diversity in our union and community as well as collective bargaining trends in Manitoba. A number of NDP MLA's attended the convention and it was inspiring to see the relationships that have been built with our members and the members of the Legislative Assembly.

Congratulations to Carmen Prefontaine and Christie Bachynski who were elected and re-elected to the positions of Vice-President and Recording Secretary respectively and to all the other members who were elected to serve on the executive board.

Work is continuing in the region to put into action the theme of the convention - "It's our time". Repairing the negative impacts of cuts and anti-worker attacks under eight years of a PC government is being addressed through efforts to establish a working relationship with the new NDP government to secure bargaining gains that begin to address both the stagnation and the losses sustained by our members under the previous PC regime.

Work is also underway to support positive legislative changes to support single step certification and to ban replacement workers. In addition, collaborative work is being done to support labour friendly representation on advisory boards, community boards, and agencies that will benefit CUPE members and all workers in Manitoba.

On April 2, the provincial government announced Budget 2024 which commits additional funding to support families and the early learning and child care sector. Specific commitments identified include supporting new child care spaces and associated operating costs, including one-time start-up grants for new school-age capital projects supporting an additional 1,980 spaces; increases to base operating grants by 5% for all funded child care facilities; additional funding to support a 2.75% increase in wages for childcare professionals; and extending \$10-a-day child care to non-school days for school-age children.

The budget will also invest \$116 million in funding to build and maintain social and affordable housing and an increase of nearly \$20 million for Community Living disABILITY services/Children's disABILITY services. Additionally, in 2024/2025, Manitoba will increase the support for the Gender-Based Violence Program-Funded Shelters by \$420,000.

The school sector has signed a solidarity pact not to accept less than other public sector workers, which is on average 16% over 4 years. The sector/locals are also in agreement to bargain to obtain a Defined Benefit Plan. In addition, bargaining in rural school divisions will also focus upon addressing the wage disparity that exists between rural and urban support workers in the school sector.

Saskatchewan

CUPE Saskatchewan held its annual convention in Saskatoon this March, where delegates held meaningful debates, discussed the importance and necessity of political action when facing right-wing governments, and elected a new president. Congratulations to Kent Peterson, who will take over the reins to steer CUPE members in the province to protect public services, defend labour rights, and make workplaces safer and healthier.

The Saskatchewan Party government released their *Classrooms, Care and Communities* budget on March 20, 2024. The fiscal forecast is bleak with a predicted deficit of \$273.2 million. The provincial budget did not include any broad-based affordability measures to address the high cost of living. There was no announcement that an increase to Saskatchewan's minimum wage, the lowest in the country, would be accelerated.

CUPE 5430 has held rallies in a number of communities across the province to highlight the impact the rising cost of living is having on health care workers and to demand the government direct Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations Inc (SAHO) to get an agreement at the table.

After CUPE 5430's success at the Court of King's Bench adjudicating a dispute over the introduction of indexation to the Saskatchewan Healthcare Employees' Pension Plan, the employers launched a judicial review and a stay application. On April 4, the stay of the decision was granted.

The Education Workers' Steering Committee held their conference in early May and the conference focused on coordinated bargaining, model collective agreement language, and combatting violence in the workplace.

As a follow up to the provincial government ramming through Bill 137, a law that prevents children under 16 from changing their preferred name or pronoun at school without the consent of a parent, a number of Pride organizations across the province have banned the Saskatchewan Party MLA's from attending their Pride events this year unless they publicly denounce Bill 137.

The Saskatchewan Legislature wrapped up its 29th session on May 16. It is notable that the Speaker of the House, Randy Weekes, tore up his Saskatchewan Party membership card, and on the last day of the session he publicly lambasted a number of his colleagues for potentially violating the legislative rules of the house, as well as threatening him personally. Almost half of the Saskatchewan Party MLA's are not seeking re-election and the Speakers' comments follow an embarrassing term where one member was charged with assault, another with procuring sex. This fall, we will work tirelessly to say goodbye to the Saskatchewan Party and elect Carla Beck and the NDP.

Judy Henley announced her resignation from her position as General Vice-President representing the Prairies (Saskatchewan and Manitoba) in May. We thank Judy for her much-appreciated contributions to CUPE and the broader labour movement and wish her well in her new position as the labour representative to the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board.

Alberta

I travelled to Medicine Hat in March to join fellow CUPE leaders, activists, and staff for CUPE Alberta's annual convention, themed "Winning the Fight!" Convention delegates not only discussed and deliberated on numerous resolutions to set priorities on the course of action for the next year, but also participated in panels on building worker power, hearing from dedicated leaders and activists from the labour movement across Canada.

It's always great to connect with members in person to hear firsthand the ways in which they are striving to improve conditions for workers, protect and deliver public services, and bargain to keep agreements strong for themselves, and future generations of unionists.

Our members are facing a constant attack from Premier Danielle Smith. Smith is trying to pass legislation to take democratic power away from municipal government, has passed legislation to stay in power for longer, and has given sweetheart deals in the tens of thousands of dollars to her insider friends, all while starving public services.

CUPE Alberta is coordinating with staff to mobilize members for the "Waging Ahead" campaign. Modelled after the successful "Bargaining Forward" campaign in New Brunswick, CUPE members in Alberta are coordinating to mount a united front, organizing across the labour movement to take on the Premier and her austerity agenda. Approximately 80% of public sector workers belonging to several unions will see their contracts expire this year, which amounts to over 260,000 workers.

Like many other parts of the country, Alberta saw an early start to the wildfire season this year. Evacuation orders were put in place for the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, with parts of Fort McMurray under evacuation alert as well. Many parts of Alberta saw air quality deteriorate as smoke drifted south. The impacts were felt by our members who work outdoors and lack adequate protective equipment. The safety of our members and staff is of utmost concern, and my office remains in close contact with the Regional Director.

A record number of Alberta New Democrats will cast their ballots on June 22 to elect a new party leader. More than 85,000 members are eligible to vote for who they want to lead them in the next attempt to form a government in Alberta. A sincere thank you to the outgoing Leader of the Opposition, and former Premier, Rachel Notley. She has been a consistent voice for workers' rights in the legislature since her election to the legislature in 2008. Her tenacity, dedication, and support for the labour movement will never be forgotten.

The Alberta Education Employees Committee (AEEC) demonstrated their power to unite and mobilize their members when they planned the #paintABpurple campaign to raise awareness on the need for fair wages for their members amid the skyrocketing cost of living. These education workers support our future generation, day in and day out, and deserve far more than what they're getting. It is inexcusable that the average yearly income for Education Assistants in the Alberta is \$26,400. CUPE members shouldn't have to get second and third jobs to keep the lights on at home.

At the end of May, the AEEC held its annual conference in Calgary. Although I was unable to attend in person, I was honoured to provide greetings to these dedicated members. These education workers prioritized strategizing at the conference on their battle ahead against the Alberta government, who has directed that all collective agreements in the sector expire on August 31, 2024. Danielle Smith and the UCP have proven time and again that they have no respect for labour rights, and this overreach is yet another example of their attempt to trample on our members' ability to bargain freely with their employers.

A report published by the Centre for Future Work shined a light on the stark reality Albertans are facing with the UCP in power. The report "*Alberta's Disappearing Advantage: The Crisis in Alberta Wages, and How to Fix It*" indicates that big corporations are recording unprecedented profits, while working people have seen a decline in their own wages. According to the report, Calgary and Edmonton are among the least affordable cities in the country, and public sector wages are down by as much as ten per cent, after factoring in inflation. CUPE activists must continue their fight against the austerity measures of the Smith government and its ploy to plummet public sector wages.

British Columbia

In April, I was pleased to be in Vancouver for CUPE BC's annual convention. Delegates debated over four days, strategizing about what course the union should take over the next 12 months. We heard from local, national, and international guest speakers about solidarity across borders, the importance of quality public services, and how crucial it is to mobilize members in advance of elections to ensure we have progressive voices in power at all levels of government.

CUPE members in my home province passed more than 45 resolutions at this year's convention to address important issues in BC, and across the country, to fight for safer workplaces, to defend social, economic, racial, and environmental justice, and to use their collective power to better not only their own lives, but also their communities.

The BC Legislature ended its spring session on May 16, 2024. This was likely the final sitting of the legislature under this government, as the next provincial election is scheduled for October 19, 2024. During this sitting, the legislature passed important legislation for the labour movement. Bill 9 closed the loophole in the *Labour Relations Code* that required provincially regulated workers to cross the picket lines of federally regulated workers. Bill 22 will implement measures to protect schools from extremist groups who threaten the safety of students and workers, like those who have been protesting the recognition of human rights for trans and queer students. Other pieces of legislation recognized the right and title of the Haida Nation over Haida Gwaii and accelerated the construction of desperately needed affordable housing.

This May, the NDP government announced that it will be moving forward with fully integrating before-and after-school care in BC schools, staffed by K-12 school support workers. The framework will use existing school space as well as school district staff and resources to offer families seamless care to children, without the burden of additional pickups and drop-offs. The pilot for this initiative will begin this fall in Chilliwack, Nanaimo-Ladysmith, and Nechako Lakes. Quality care and learning will be provided by early childhood educators, education assistants, and other support staff. Each district will operate under a different model, all of which must meet provincial guidelines and care needs, and the initiative will be assessed to support the expansion in other districts across the province.

In the meantime, CUPE 728 is hard at work advocating to address staffing shortages and lack of funding. This led to a backlog of work orders for schools that are creating safety issues for our members and students. Outside contractors are used to address workforce shortages, amid the union carpentry department's 2,500 work orders. It's estimated that more than \$700 million is needed to take care of the outstanding issues. If these issues are not addressed in a timely manner, outdated systems break down due to lack of maintenance and that means increased expenses.

CUPE 2087 members, who work for the City of Trail have ratified a new three-year agreement. Negotiations were respectful, and the local achieved a contract that saw not only meaningful gains to allow these workers to keep up with the rising cost of living, but also meant improved services for Trail residents. The new deal in place until March 2027 provided for a 14% wage increase over the course of the agreement, improvements to benefits, and scheduling.

Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)

Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) members received a 3% general wage increase on April 1, 2024. Since the expiry of the previous collective agreement, FBA members' wages over the three years of the renewed agreement have risen by between 13.57% and 14.22%, depending on their job classification.

The FBA bargaining committee secured protections for member pay cheques against inflation in the second and third years of the contract, by linking the general wage increase to the annualized average inflation rate. Based on B.C.'s cost-of-living calculations between March 2023 and February 2024, the full inflationary adjustment was triggered, leading to the maximum 3% pay boost.

The Hospital Employees' Union submitted a proposal this spring for several amendments to the *Labour Relations Code*. Activists have put forward meaningful additions, modifications, and improvements to *the Code* to address contracting out and successorship rights, pay equity, and improvements to the collective bargaining process.

In the early 2000s, under the BC Liberals, bills 29 and 94 were passed through the legislature, resulting in mass layoffs (largely affecting racialized women), and widespread privatization of health care support services. The negative impacts of these laws gave rise to hospital closures, consolidation of services, and job insecurity, while global corporations profited off the backs of patients and workers with multi-year contracts. Employers in the long-term care sector were authorized to pull out of the FBA collective agreement, and privatize services, hiring workers for lesser wages, and close to no benefits, while padding their coffers. Private corporations were recording sky-high profits – from taxpayers' dollars – while workers were living below the poverty line.

In 2018, the BC NDP passed the *Health Sector Statutes Repeal Act* (Bill 47), a reversal of those imposed almost two decades before by the BC Liberals. After almost 20 years of fighting, more than 4,000 support services workers were repatriated back to BC's public health care system. Unfortunately, these workers still aren't offered successorship protections in the *Labour Relations Code*. The HEU is determined to right this wrong by advocating for an amendment to bridge the gap.

HEU is also proposing an alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to prioritize reconciliation.

HEU is mobilizing its membership in anticipation of upcoming provincial and federal elections. “Why Politics Mater: An introductory workshop for HEU members” aims to raise awareness on how those in power shape and affect their work, communities, and lives. The workshops were scheduled to take place in-person in nine communities across the province, along with a virtual workshop, from mid-April to early June. I applaud the initiatives these CUPE members are taking to ready themselves for the battles that we’re going to face at the ballot boxes.

The hard work of HEU makes it clear to health care workers in BC that being part of a union that works hard for its members pays I extend a warm CUPE welcome to our newest HEU members, workers at Horizon House, who joined Canada’s greatest union this April!

Airlines

This spring, Air Canada released its annual report and flaunted their profits during a shareholders’ meeting. More than 10,000 CUPE members of Air Canada Component who work as flight attendants have been campaigning for several months that “Unpaid Work Won’t Fly.” All the while, the employer is boasting about sky-high profits, while an average of 35 hours per worker per month is unpaid labour. Our members who keep passengers safe in the sky won’t stop until they are remunerated for every hour they’re on the job.

With collective agreements with two of Canada’s largest airlines, Air Canada and WestJet, up for renegotiation next year, the Airline Division is ramping up pressures to call for an end to the unjust abuse they suffer by being forced to work for free. The division held a press conference at the end of May calling for legislative change and demanding better compensation. Currently, flight attendants are only paid starting when the planes are in motion, and remuneration stops when the planes arrive at the gates after landing. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the NDP, was present at the presser and vowed to work with our members to get the Liberals to implement the necessary changes to put a stop to unpaid labour.

Organizing

For the reporting period of April 1 to June 30, 2024, CUPE welcomed 1,935 new members in 19 bargaining units, including 645 in health, 917 in education, and 212 in post-secondary education. There are currently 129 active campaigns underway that, if successful, could bring 41,532 new members to our union.

In the Maritimes, there are currently 11 active campaigns which could bring 899 workers into CUPE, including 345 in social services.

Our Atlantic region currently has three active campaigns in social services, health, and recreation, culture, and entertainment, which would see 289 new members join our union.

Quebec has 22 active campaigns underway in various sectors, that could bring 6,773 new members into the CUPE family.

The Ontario region continues its organizing efforts, with 28 active campaigns in various sectors that have the potential to add 14,553 new members to our union, including 2,633 in municipal services and more than 9,451 members in health care.

Manitoba has eight active campaigns, which could see 1,345 new members join our union, including 913 workers in education.

Saskatchewan has 13 active campaigns in various sectors, where we hope to bring 1,359 new workers into CUPE, 994 of which are education workers.

The Alberta region was busy with 15 active organizing campaigns that could bring in 2,325 new members into CUPE. Five of the ongoing campaigns are in the education sector where CUPE is hoping to add 1,505 members.

In British Columbia, there are 28 active campaigns across various sectors including social services, recreation, culture and entertainment, and municipal services, with the potential of welcoming 4,535 new members.

In Memoriam/Personal

Members

Cory Bender	CUPE 456 – Saskatchewan
Robert Stevens	CUPE 1960 – Ontario
David Nitschmann	CUPE 4480 – Ontario
Michael Adams	CUPE 4705 – Ontario
Jill Harburn	CUPE 4222 – Ontario
Lawrence Stefanowich	CUPE 5123 – Saskatchewan
Laura Connor	CUPE 4222 – Ontario
Don MacLeod	CUPE 167 retiree and former NEB Member - Ontario

Retired Staff

Marie Taylor	Clerk-Typist Airline Division
Jacqueline Gilbert	Administrative Assistant British Columbia Regional Office
Kenneth Hopper	Assistant Director Organizing and Regional Services National Office

Jim Swaok

Managing Director
Organizing and Regional Services
National Office

Beulah (Barbara) Wilson

Assistant Bookkeeper
Airline Division

Linda Hanton

Administrative Support Professional
Kenora Area Office

Anna Sweet

National Representative
Sudbury Area Office

Active Staff

Rose Nas de Tourris

Administrative Assistant
Union Education Branch
National Office

Fraternal

Alan Willaert

Canadian Federation of Musicians (CFM)
American Federation of Musicians (AFM)

In solidarity,

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

MARK HANCOCK
National President

:sg/ceu