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## **NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT SEPTEMBER 2024 – DECEMBER 2024**

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Sisters, Brothers and Friends:

As the year comes to an end, it's a great time to look back on the work we've done over the last 12 months. Our union has significant accomplishments to be proud of this year, and there is no doubt that we are only getting stronger as we continue to grow.

When right-wing governments in various regions threaten the vital public services Canadians rely upon, CUPE members are there to defend them. When hostile employers show up to the bargaining table with concessions and austerity agendas, CUPE members are there to defend their worth and their collective agreements. And when politicians try to force locked-out or striking workers back on the job, CUPE members are there to defend Charter rights to free and fair collective bargaining.

This September, Jagmeet Singh put an end to the Confidence and Supply Agreement between the NDP and Liberals. And while there will always be nay-sayers who slam Jagmeet for “propping up” Trudeau, we know better.

We know that so many Canadians are now able to access life-saving medications and contraceptive drugs that were completely out of their reach and budgets before. We know that so many Canadians are now visiting dentists for the first time, because they no longer have to choose between paying rent or getting emergency dental care. And we know that we have anti-scab legislation that now prevents the use of replacement workers in federally regulated workplaces during labour action.

But my friends, we still have so much more work to do. We can't afford to lose what we've just recently won. We can't afford to let hate, intolerance, and division take hold of our country. And we can't afford to have Pierre Poilievre as our next Prime Minister.

**MARK HANCOCK**

National President/Président national

**CANDACE RENNICK**

National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorière nationale

**PATRICK GLOUTNEY, FRED HAHN, SHERRY HILLIER, GINA MCKAY, KAREN RANALLETTA**

General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

We watched with disappointment and disgust as results poured in on election day in the United States, because we recognize the significant challenges to global peace, democracy, and climate action. But we must remain determined to not lose hope. The fight against far-right forces and the protection of our hard-won rights and public services require unwavering commitment, and we must continue to stand strong.

Donald Trump's re-election following a campaign laced with disrespect and hate is a reminder that we must do everything in our power to ensure that we don't elect someone with similar interests here in Canada. At home, we face similar challenges with Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, who poses threats to workers, women, and marginalized communities. But together with our allies, we must battle against regressive forces. We must extend solidarity to those fighting for justice and a better future and remain steadfast in our pursuit of a more equitable and compassionate world for all.

### **Back to Work Orders**

Federal Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon moved to once again interfere in the process of free collective bargaining by invoking a rarely used provision of the Canada Labour Code to ask the Canadian Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) to end employer lockouts at ports in British Columbia, Montreal, and Quebec City, referring the disputes to binding arbitration. We have seen a disturbing trend develop across all these disputes where the employers refuse to engage in meaningful bargaining, eventually locking out workers and then calling on the government to intervene. While the Minister justified his decision on the economic impact of port shutdowns, we know that the real cost is to the rights of workers across the country.

This intervention once again undermines Charter-protected rights to collective bargaining and the right to strike. The use of Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code in this manner means that these extreme measures are not even open for debate or a vote in the House of Commons, giving the Minister unilateral power to deny workers' constitutional rights. It also undermines the CIRB's independence. It's not the first time the government has interfered in this manner, and we will not allow this dangerous precedent to stand. The 2015 Supreme Court ruling affirmed that workers' rights to bargain and strike are constitutionally protected, yet the government continues to disregard these rights under the guise of "exceptional circumstances". We must remain vigilant, push back against attacks on workers' rights, and stand united against these injustices.

## **National Sector Council Conference**

It was great to spend time with CUPE members who gathered in Winnipeg in October. The conference was a wonderful opportunity for members to meet with and learn from workers doing similar work in other regions of the country, sharing stories and strategies. They also heard, and learned from, presentations and expert panels on topics including fighting inflation without weakening workers, the rise of violence in the workplace, and reclaiming worker power. Many took the opportunity to participate in the Winnipeg General Strike bus tours – an added highlight of the conference.

## **International Solidarity**

In November, I was part of a delegation to the Public Services International (PSI) Inter-American Regional Conference (IAMRECON) in Bogotá. The conference, attended by 400 delegates from the Americas and the Caribbean, focused on privatization, the rise of the right wing, democracy, labour rights, and geopolitics. Topics such as tax justice, digitalization, pension fund privatization, care policies, and collective bargaining were discussed. National Executive Board Regional Vice-President Barb Nederpel gave a compelling presentation on care work and privatization.

While in Colombia, we also visited our partner, NOMADESC, in Valle de Cauca. I spent a few days, alongside a smaller delegation, with NOMADESC's leadership, experiencing both heartbreak and inspiration. Highlights included meetings with University of the Peoples' graduates, Black Communities Process leaders discussing systemic racism in Buenaventura, former mayor Victor Vidal, and Nestlé workers in Buga. The trip reinforced the vital importance of international solidarity for a globally organized trade union movement.

## 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	Ratified October 8, 2024
Ontario	CUPE 2361	University of Western Ontario	325	August 30, 2024	Ratified October 11, 2024
Alberta	CUPE 2545	Fort McMurray Public School Board	605	November 13-14, 2024. Rolling strikes as of November 18, 2024	Ongoing
Alberta	CUPE 2559	Fort McMurray Roman Catholic School Board	544	November 13-14, 2024. Rolling strikes as of November 18, 2024	Ongoing
Quebec	CUPE 375	Maritimes Employers Association	1042	On strike September 30, October 2, October 27, October 31 and November 10, 2024. Locked out November 10, 2024	Lockout ended by CIRB on November 16, 2024 following Ministerial referral on November 12, 2024
Alberta	CUPE 3550	Edmonton Public School Board	2337	October 24, 2024	1 day
Ontario	CUPE 831	City of Brampton	1203	November 7, 2024	Ratified November 15, 2024
Saskatchewan	CUPE 2669	Saskatoon Public Library	258	November 12 and November 19, 2024	2 days
Ontario	CUPE 905	City of Richmond Hill	220	November 22, 2024	Ongoing
Quebec	CUPE 2867	Town of Rivière-Rouge	47	December 4, 2024	1 day

## **CUPE 2614**

On September 15, 2022, the Port of Quebec locked out 81 members of CUPE 2614. In the intervening years, the Port has continued to operate through the shameful use of scab labour as the members held the line to fight for their issues including more predictable schedules to improve work-life balance.

On November 12, 26 months after the members were locked out, federal Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon invoked a rarely used provision of the Canada Labour Code to ask the CIRB to intervene and end lockouts at the Ports of Quebec, Montreal, and Vancouver. The local challenged the constitutionality of the order and no decision ending the lockout has been issued yet.

## **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.

After nearly a year on the picket line, the members of CUPE 2815 voted to ratify a new collective agreement on October 8, 2024. The new agreement sees retroactive increases of more than six percent along with a five percent lump sum payment, as well as improvements to scheduling and job security protections for the life of the agreement.

## **CUPE 2361**

CUPE 2361 – representing custodial, trades, and maintenance workers at the University of Western Ontario – held strong on the picket line for six weeks in the face of the employer bringing scabs onto campus. With strong support from a coalition of other unions on campus, the local was successful in achieving a new collective agreement that included wage adjustments ranging from 20.94% to 29.48% over a four-year agreement. These increases are among the highest wage increases in the Ontario public sector and begin to address cost of living and staffing recruitment/retention issues.

## **CUPE 2545 and CUPE 2559**

Members of CUPE 2545 and CUPE 2559 represent staff of the Fort McMurray Public School Board and Fort McMurray Roman Catholic School Board, respectively. These workers were originally set to go on strike on September 17 to address the lack of a real wage increase in over a decade.

Instead, they were hit by the Alberta government's use of an antiquated provision of the Labour Relations Code imposing a Dispute Inquiry Board. This action removed the locals' ability to strike until at least 30 days had passed, and the membership had voted on a recommendation from the provincially appointed mediator.

In a vote held between November 1 to November 4, members of both locals overwhelmingly rejected the recommended settlement. After the required notice period, the full membership of both locals went on strike November 13 and 14, and subsequently began rolling strikes on November 18.

### **CUPE 375**

CUPE 375 members at the Port of Montreal have successfully fought back multiple attempts by their employer to deny their right to strike by having them declared an essential service. In this round of bargaining, members were determined to correct long-standing scheduling issues that were not addressed by the arbitrator when their last round of bargaining was ended with back-to-work legislation.

In this most recent round, the members engaged in a three-day strike from September 30 to October 2, followed by an overtime strike beginning on October 10. When a deal was not forthcoming, the local commenced strike action again on October 31. After the members nearly unanimously rejected an offer from the employer, they were locked out effective November 10.

Two days later, federal Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon, through the same type of order that impacted CUPE 2614, sought to have the CIRB intervene and end the lockout. The CIRB issued an order on November 14 ending the lockout, suspending the right to strike, and ordering the parties to resume operations on November 16. The CIRB referred the matter to mediation for 90 days, after which the dispute is to be dealt with through binding arbitration.

### **CUPE 3550**

In a similar situation to their counterparts in Fort McMurray, the members of CUPE 3550 were prepared to strike on October 24 when the government stepped in and appointed another Dispute Inquiry Board. In a show of defiance, the membership engaged in a one-day political protest on what would have been the first day of their strike. Thousands of CUPE 3550 members marched to the legislature where they met thousands of other members from unions across Alberta – engaging in one of the largest protests the province has ever seen.

### **CUPE 831**

Members of the four bargaining units of CUPE 831, representing full-time and temporary staff at the City of Brampton, walked off the job on November 7 to demand better pay. After a week on the picket line, members ratified a new collective agreement that saw wage increases, an advance on retroactive pay and a lump sum signing bonus, along with the establishment of a health spending account and other contract improvements.

## **CUPE 2669**

CUPE 2669 members working at the Saskatoon Public Library engaged in one-day strikes on November 12 and 19 to apply pressure on their employer to provide meaningful wage increases in the context of the cost-of-living crisis and to address safety measures for workers and library patrons. As of this report, negotiations are ongoing.

## **CUPE 905 – City of Richmond Hill**

City of Richmond Hill outside workers, and members of CUPE 905, went on strike on November 22 to secure wage increases that address the sky-rocketing cost of living, and to address the precarity of the members working part-time at the municipally operated theatre.

## **CUPE 2867**

Faced with an impasse in negotiations, the roughly 50 members of CUPE 2867, representing inside and outside workers at the Town of Rivière-Rouge, engaged in a one-day strike on December 4. The strike was followed by a work-to-rule campaign refusing overtime until a deal can be reached that brings salaries in line with other neighbouring municipalities.

## **Bargaining**

After working through a multi-year strategic plan that saw incredible levels of member engagement, CUPE 5399 members at Toronto's South Riverdale Community Health Centre ratified their second collective agreement on November 7. This round of bargaining was bolstered by one-on-one conversations with members to build support for multiple actions throughout the bargaining process.

The agreement reached sees wage increases of 13% over three years – including a six percent increase retroactive to April 1, as well as significant improvements to sick leave, vacation, and benefits – including a more than six-fold increase to mental health supports. The new agreement also includes enhanced severance provisions for those members who will be impacted by Doug Ford's decision to close a number of supervised consumption sites.

On November 12, members of CUPE 128 who work for the City of Val-d'Or voted 91% in favour of a tentative agreement with the city covering the 2023-2029 period. The contract provides for a minimum of 21.5% salary increase, on top of the implementation of a new wage grid effective December 1, 2024. This will provide further increases to many job classifications. The agreement also includes improved working conditions for probationary, temporary, seasonal, and part-time employees, increased leaves and bonuses, and improved group insurance.

Employees will also now benefit from an early retirement clause and will be able to access additional weeks of vacation more quickly. Talks began in the spring of 2023. In addition to 25 days of bargaining, the local participated in the evaluation process that led to the new wage grid.

CUPE 888 members at Grand Falls Regional Municipality in New Brunswick ratified a new collective agreement that saw significant financial gains to address the spiraling cost-of-living. Among numerous other gains, the new agreement included a hybrid flat rate/percentage increase of \$0.50 and 4.75% in the first year, followed by percentage increases of 4.25%, 3.5%, 3%, and 3% over the life of the collective agreement.

## **Regional Updates**

### **Atlantic Region**

#### **Newfoundland and Labrador**

New Democratic Party Leader Jim Dinn presented a petition to the House of Assembly, signed by nearly 1,400 CUPE service and support workers from Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services urging the Furey government to address ongoing recruitment and retention challenges in the health care sector. This marks another attempt by workers to engage the government in meaningful dialogue, after previous meetings with Health Minister John Hogan where their concerns were dismissed as “bargaining issues”. Despite the government’s refusal to address these concerns, the workers are calling for equal treatment, particularly in light of last year’s wage increases given to certain health care classifications outside of bargaining, while service and support workers were excluded from these discussions.

CUPE argues that the government’s approach is unfair, pointing out the contradiction between offering wage increases to select groups of health care workers and dismissing the concerns of support staff. Health care workers have expressed frustration over the lack of attention given to their issues despite multiple petitions and meetings with government officials. The roles of service and support staff are essential in the functioning of health care facilities, and without their contributions, the health care system would fail. The petition aimed to bring attention to the vital role of these workers and demand that the government address their needs with the same urgency given to other health care professionals.

With less than a year left in the Furey government’s mandate, rumblings of a looming election have been heard across Newfoundland and Labrador. We’re hearing and seeing more of the major political parties across the region, which leads many to believe that the current path leads to a campaign trail. CUPE activists will be ready to get boots on the ground when the writ drops.



## **Nova Scotia**

Earlier this fall, I addressed members in Truro as they gathered for their provincial All Committees' Meeting. Committee members participated in various sessions which included, among others, member mobilization and building inclusive unions. I'm always pleased to join members when they come together to share strategies and experiences to strengthen our union.

I was back in Nova Scotia less than a month later to attend the Atlantic and Maritimes regions' Dollars and Sen\$e conference in Halifax. Hosted by the National Secretary-Treasurer's Office, it was aimed at assisting executives with local finances and promoting good financial governance. The conference offered informative workshops and held great panels on important topics and was overall a tremendous success.

Home care workers in Nova Scotia reached out to community members to ask them to share personal stories of their experiences with workers in the sector in a campaign aimed at sharing stories with the Houston government to highlight the important work these vital workers do to care for some of the most vulnerable members of their communities. Critical care assistants (CCA) in the province are enduring working conditions that are less than optimal, while being paid much lower than their worth, and enduring precarity across the sector. CUPE members in home care want the government to acknowledge that the care they provide is not only critical to their patients and their families, but also to an optimal health care system.

Over 5,000 school support workers in Nova Scotia are calling on the provincial government to address critical issues affecting students, staff, and families, including understaffing, heavy workloads, and rising violence in public schools. Despite increasing reports of violent incidents, including in the Halifax Regional Centre for Education and the cancellation of 22 bus routes due to staffing shortages, the government has failed to engage in meaningful discussions or provide solutions.

CUPE Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia School Board Council of Unions (NSSBCU) are highlighting the need for more schools and infrastructure to meet growing student numbers, as well as policies to improve workplace safety and support staff. A recent report from the Auditor General and a worker-led review on violence in schools have underscored the urgency of the situation, with union leaders urging the government to adopt their proposed solutions to address the crisis.

A recent writ drop threw the province into full election mode. Nova Scotians headed to the polls on November 26, 2024. Premier Houston called a snap election, hoping to secure a second term majority government for the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Party. Although it is disappointing to see the party return to the legislature with a majority of seats, the rise of the Nova Scotia NDP to Official Opposition is proof that many Nova Scotians want a more progressive province. Claudia Chender made history on November 26, becoming the province's first elected woman Leader of the Opposition.

CUPE activists across Nova Scotia can be proud of their efforts in pulling support for the NDP by ramping up their political action and getting boots on the ground. CUPE members know that scheming politicians like Houston can't be trusted.

The Premier violated his own government's law by pushing Nova Scotians to the polls earlier than he'd promised in 2021, when he was attempting to earn their trust. The premature election comes with a significant cost, as early elections cost far more than those planned in advance. This waste of taxpayers' dollars could have been better spent on essential investments in public services.

## **Maritimes Region**

### **New Brunswick**

Since my last report, CUPE activists in New Brunswick have been intently focused on political action, motivated by the urgent need to remove the Progressive Conservative (PC) government that has left workers falling further behind since it took office.

Despite reporting a \$2.8 billion surplus in recent years, the PC government had continued to prioritize corporate interests while ignoring the growing hardship faced by public sector workers. Many of these workers are living in poverty, relying on food banks, unable to afford transportation, and struggling with basic living costs. These issues, which affect so many New Brunswickers, have been largely ignored by the PC government since they came to power in 2018.

CUPE kept its members fully informed about the high stakes in the provincial election, making it clear that a vote for any PC candidate was a vote for Higgs. With a series of webinars designed to educate and mobilize, our staff, members, and activists were instrumental in highlighting the need for change and should be proud of their efforts.

In October, New Brunswickers delivered a clear message at the ballot box, sending Blaine Higgs packing. After six years of deep cuts to public services and a blatant disregard for workers' rights, it was with great relief to see not only his removal from the Premier's Office, but also his defeat in the legislature when he lost his seat. Voters across the province turned out in full force to make it clear that they were done with Higgs and the damage his government inflicted on the people of New Brunswick.

As CUPE members and staff, we remain committed to holding the new government accountable. We'll be putting Susan Holt and the New Brunswick Liberals on notice: we demand real investments in vital public services, a firm commitment against privatization, and fair wages for the invaluable workers who deliver these essential services. We're pleased to learn that Holt plans to repeal Bill 17, which CUPE challenged through legal action earlier this year. The controversial bill sought to impose detrimental changes to workers' pensions through legislation, bypassing the collective bargaining process. As a union committed to defending our Charter rights, CUPE has always stood firm against such attacks.

While this victory seems within reach, our work is far from done. We will continue holding the government accountable in our ongoing fight for a stronger, more equitable New Brunswick.

## **Prince Edward Island**

The Prince Edward Island (PEI) government's recent approval of massive pay raises for six-figure executives – without proper process – stands in stark contrast to how it is treating frontline health care workers. While CUPE members who work in health care on the Island, many who earn just \$20.98/hr, are being forced into binding arbitration instead of being offered fair wages at the bargaining table, the government continues to approve unauthorized salary hikes for CEOs and management. These decisions come at the expense of workers who keep the health care system running. When frontline workers are mistakenly overpaid, the government is quick to reclaim those funds, but when it comes to executives earning over \$100,000 a year, there's no similar scrutiny, and these unauthorized raises for top-earners are approved without question.

This discrepancy is part of a broader pattern of mismanagement under the current Conservative government, which continues to prioritize private sector solutions, such as travel nurses, private long-term care beds, and clinics, while shortchanging the public system. Instead of investing in the public health care system and respecting collective bargaining rights, the King government wastes money on bonuses for the higher-ups, wasteful spending, and corporate interests. At every turn, CUPE has proposed real solutions to improve wages, increase staffing, and strengthen the public system. But rather than listen, PEI Progressive Conservatives continue to neglect workers and undermine public services. I was thrilled to see CUPE PEI call out King and his government to immediately implement fair wage increases and return to the bargaining table with a fair offer for our hardworking members.

Health care workers on Prince Edward Island continue to resist an unacceptable wage offer, highlighting the government's lack of interest in engaging in a fair collective bargaining process. The government holds the ultimate legislative tool – binding arbitration – but has yet to use it to reach a reasonable agreement. In response, the health care council has been intensifying its efforts to engage members and organize collective actions, aiming to pressure the government into negotiating fair wages. An anti-privatization coalition was created, and work is underway for an anti-privatization summit at the end of November. During the government's pre-budget consultation meetings, CUPE was present to deliver an excellent presentation, despite being limited to just six minutes.

## Quebec

The SCFP-Québec's Conseil québécois des autochtones marked the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30 by once again calling on the Quebec government to make this date a statutory holiday. The Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) has never been sensitive to Indigenous demands, and it proved this once again by ignoring the SCFP-Québec's call.

The conflict at the Port of Montreal attracted considerable attention this fall. CUPE 375 members initiated a variety of pressure tactics to push negotiations forward: ad hoc strikes, overtime strikes, and strikes targeting the Termont terminals – nothing got the Maritime Employers Association (MEA) moving in the right direction. The Association, which has filed numerous legal appeals – all rejected by the courts – put forward unreasonable offers that were overwhelmingly rejected by the members which triggered a lockout. It then hastened to cry out in despair and called on the federal Minister of Labour to intervene and block the use of the very pressure tactic it had just employed. How ironic! Unfortunately, Labour Minister MacKinnon, who shows no respect for the fundamental rights of workers, abused his power by ordering the Canadian Industrial Relations Board to terminate the right to strike and send the parties to binding arbitration. This intervention violates not only the Canadian Charter but also the independence of a specialized labour relations tribunal that had, until then, been respected by both management and unions.

The longshore workers at the Port of Montreal, like those at the Port of Quebec, are seeking work schedules that allow them to have a normal family life. The binding arbitration imposed on the Montreal longshore workers in 2021 by the Liberals, with Conservative support, failed to address this issue – the arbitrator deferred the matter to the next round of negotiations. Ignoring this context, the minister imposed this false solution on CUPE 2614 and CUPE 375, once again pushing the problem down the road. These orders are, unsurprisingly, being challenged in court by both locals and the National Union.

In October, Hydro-Québec confirmed the development of another large wind farm, this time in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region, within the Kamouraska Regional County Municipality (RCM), in partnership with the Eastern Energy Alliance, a limited partnership. This means private interests will control its development and, ultimately, the pricing of this new electrical energy. There is no doubt that the government is moving to increase the share of privately produced electricity in Quebec. The CAQ never campaigned on the privatization of electricity in Quebec. Yet François Legault is prioritizing the interests of a small group of individuals over the collective interests of citizens. At this rate, nearly 25% of electricity production in Quebec will be in private hands by 2035. CUPE continues to defend Quebec's public electricity production model, which has successfully supported the province's economic development for more than 50 years. We call on all parties in the National Assembly to denounce this privatization.

The employees of Saint-André-d'Argenteuil, represented by CUPE 4819, signed their new collective agreement in mid-October. The parties agreed to initiate a genuine job evaluation process to ensure that each municipal role is fairly compensated. Along with this process, set to begin by 2026, the agreement includes salary increases totaling 21% over five years and enhanced contributions to the pension plan. Additionally, temporary, seasonal, and student workers will receive a three percent premium to offset the benefits they miss out on due to their precarious employment status.

In November, the members of the Provincial School Support Council took advantage of their meeting in Gatineau to visit us at the National Office in Ottawa. Candace and I were happy to host them for breakfast. Everyone had the chance to tour our offices, get a glimpse of the essential work done at 1375 St. Laurent Boulevard to support the locals, learn a bit of history, explore my Lego collection depicting CUPE jobs, and share a few laughs over anecdotes.

## **Ontario**

Premier Doug Ford's announcement of a \$200 tax-free rebate for Ontarians (later copied by Justin Trudeau at the federal level), with an additional \$200 for parents per child, is nothing more than a pre-election strategy to improve his ratings, rather than a meaningful solution to address the province's economic challenges. The rebate, which will cost the province \$3 billion, comes just before a potential early election and is seen by many as an attempt to buy votes with one-time handouts, rather than addressing the underlying issues of high living costs and underfunded public services. While Ford justified the rebate by citing inflation and federal tax changes, his government should instead deliver sustainable tax relief, such as the long-promised middle-income tax cut, rather than relying on temporary measures that do little to address the real financial struggles faced by Ontarians.

We know that Doug Ford prioritizes the interests of his wealthy friends, and we still remember how he tried to cut public sector wages through Bill 124 and undermine workers' rights with Bill 28. Ontarians need a government that invests in the public services that are desperately needed, not a measly cheque that won't cover a week's groceries.

In health care, the Ontario government's plan to issue new licenses to for-profit clinics this fall has sparked strong opposition from the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU) and the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC), who are calling on the government to prioritize investment in public hospitals instead.

At Queen's Park and 50 communities across the province, a 15-foot Trojan Horse replica was displayed as a symbol of the dangers of privatizing hospital surgeries, warning that it would drain resources from public hospitals and worsen wait times for patients.

OCHU has criticized the privatization plan, arguing it would lead to staff shortages, service closures, and longer wait times in the public system, while private clinics would impose unaffordable out-of-pocket costs on patients, particularly those with lower incomes. Research has shown that privatization exacerbates health disparities, with wealthier Ontarians seeing increased access to surgeries, while the poorest face reduced access. Private clinics have also been reported to charge patients up to \$8,000, raising serious concerns about unethical practices and violations of medicare laws.

The Ford government's push for privatization includes plans to grant licenses for private clinics to perform 100,000 MRIs and CT scans, even as public hospitals remain chronically underfunded. Past examples have shown that private clinics are more expensive than public hospitals, diverting taxpayer dollars into for-profit health care and undermining the public system. The government must focus on improving public hospitals by increasing staffing, capacity, and funding, with a long-term investment plan to expand hospital services and staff.

Early childhood educators deserve improved wages and working conditions for the vital work they do. While challenges remain, the benefits of the \$10-a-day program should continue to be implemented and expanded. The quality of this new system, supported by taxpayer funding, will work better for both families and workers, if profit is taken out of it.

CUPE's campaign "[Shine a light on early learning and child care](#)" highlights the vital work that workers in childcare do and demands that the federal government fund a national workforce strategy in conjunction with provinces and territories to address the crisis in this sector. There is no doubt that caring for children during these crucial and formative years is work that deserves fair wages, adequate benefits, access to a pension plan, and so much more.

Ontario's child welfare system is in crisis, with vulnerable youth being placed in unsuitable environments like hotels and motels due to a lack of proper care and support. Despite years of attempts to reform the system, progress has been minimal, and a recent audit announcement is seen as a distraction from the government's failure to address systemic issues. Premier Doug Ford continues to blame individual agencies instead of acknowledging the root causes, such as underfunding and mismanagement.

Since 2020, the Ford government's child welfare overhaul aimed at early intervention and family preservation has been poorly funded, leaving agencies struggling. Vulnerable children need urgent support, and profit should be removed from care models, as for-profit group homes exploit the system's shortcomings. Advocates are calling for an end to for-profit group homes, province-wide licensing, and the implementation of expert recommendations. However, the government has ignored these calls, including shutting down the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, demonstrating a lack of commitment to real change.

The Ford government's plan to replace personal support workers (PSWs) with less-trained resident support aides in Ontario's long-term care homes has drawn strong opposition from CUPE. The proposed amendment to the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act* would make the temporary use of resident support aides permanent, a practice that began during the pandemic. As CUPE has been warning since this temporary classification was created – this puts vulnerable residents at risk, as their complex needs required skilled, trained staff.

Rather than leaving the care of our loved ones to untrained aides, a comprehensive strategy is needed to address the PSW shortage, including recruiting and training new workers, improving compensation, and offering opportunities for aides to upgrade their skills.

## **Manitoba**

CUPE mourns the passing of Murray Sinclair, Manitoba's first Indigenous lawyer and judge. Sinclair also served as a Senator, and Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). His leadership in the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the TRC deeply influenced CUPE's work in advocating for justice and reconciliation for Indigenous peoples.

His 94 TRC calls to action continue to guide CUPE's efforts, especially in education and reconciliation. We remain thankful to Sinclair for his activism, from advancing Indigenous workplace rights to advocating for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. CUPE extends its condolences to Justice Sinclair's family and reaffirms its commitment to working with Indigenous communities for justice.

A recent survey of over 5,000 health care support workers in Manitoba reveals a significant staffing crisis, with nearly 50% of workers either planning to leave or already looking for new jobs. Over 65% of those seeking new employment are considering leaving the public health care system altogether.

The survey also highlights that only 28% of health care aides feel staffing levels are adequate to provide proper care, and over 75% report working short-staffed at least once a week. The findings underscored the urgent need for government and employers to address the issues of recruitment, retention, wages, and working conditions in the health care sector.

Meaningful improvements are crucial to preventing further staff attrition and improving patient care. The survey results reflect a widespread sentiment that cultural shifts alone will not resolve the crisis, but rather better wages and working conditions are necessary to retain staff.

CUPE and the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union (MGEU) reached a tentative agreement with the Provincial Health Labour Relations Secretariat (PHLRS) on behalf of approximately 25,000 health care support workers in Manitoba, 18,000 of them CUPE members. The agreement postponed a planned strike, pending member ratification.

CUPE is proud of these health care workers who were militant in mobilizing to achieve a fair deal that included wage increases that will help workers cope with the rising cost-of-living while addressing the ongoing health care staffing crisis. The details of the agreement will be shared with members at upcoming information meetings, and ratification votes will follow.

The agreement covers health care support workers across several health regions, including Shared Health Manitoba, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and Southern Health. The bargaining units involved represent a wide range of workers, such as health care aides, laundry aides, housekeeping aides, dietary aides, ward clerks, and community health workers. The tentative deal acknowledges the critical role these workers play in the health care system and provides fair wage increases to support both retention and recruitment of workers in Manitoba's health care sector.

## **Saskatchewan**

Municipal elections were held across the province on November 13. This was a change election with several incumbent mayors losing their re-election bids. Our members were highly engaged in a number of campaigns which saw positive results, including the election of many labour-endorsed candidates.

In October, I had the opportunity to canvas in Saskatoon for our members Tammy Pike and Vicki Mowat who were both NDP candidates in the provincial election campaign. I also travelled to Prince Albert and met with representatives from CUPE 160 and CUPE 882.

Nearly 500 workers from across the province gathered outside the Saskatoon Cabinet Office to voice their frustration with the Saskatchewan Party Government under Premier Scott Moe. The rally, held during the second day of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour Convention, reflected widespread dissatisfaction with Moe's leadership, particularly in health care, education, and the economy. The Saskatchewan Party is infamous for its neglect of key public services, including a struggling health care system, cuts to education, and the lowest minimum wage in Canada.

Unfortunately, Premier Moe and the Saskatchewan Party secured a fifth consecutive majority government in the province's recent election, despite losing significant ground in the province's major cities. While the Saskatchewan Party maintained its stronghold in rural areas, it was largely rejected in urban centers, with the NDP gaining a substantial foothold in Regina and Saskatoon. The NDP doubled its seat total to 27, making notable gains by defeating key Saskatchewan Party ministers, and reclaiming the rural northern riding of Athabasca.



Despite Moe's claims that his government "heard the message" on issues like health care, education, and affordability, the election results underscore deep dissatisfaction with his leadership in urban centers, where voters were demanding real change.

The Saskatchewan NDP's rise is a clear indication that Saskatchewan residents are increasingly dissatisfied with the Saskatchewan Party's policies, especially on vital public services. We applaud the Saskatchewan NDP's strong performance, and vow to keep Moe accountable to start prioritizing people over profits and start acting on the pressing issues facing the province.

A troubling study from the University of Ottawa reveals alarming rates of workplace violence and harassment in Saskatchewan's schools, echoing calls from CUPE and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) for urgent action. The survey found that 84% of education workers faced physical threats or force, and 87% encountered harassment in the 2022-23 school year. These statistics highlight the impact of chronic underfunding, which has left teachers, assistants, and staff vulnerable to violence, often from students or parents. The study calls for increased staffing and resources to address student needs and improve the work environment. CUPE and STF are demanding greater investment in the safety and well-being of both educators and students. The safety and effectiveness of Saskatchewan's education system require serious commitments to funding and support.

CUPE health care workers are sounding the alarm about the severe crisis in rural Saskatchewan's health care system, highlighting recent emergency service closures in multiple towns and the dangerous impacts of these disruptions. With a staggering 952 service disruptions and nearly 7,000 days of health facility closures reported between 2019 and 2023, rural areas – particularly southeast Saskatchewan – are struggling with chronic understaffing and lack of access to critical care. CUPE 5430 is calling for urgent action to address these issues, including the expansion of full-time positions and solutions to retain health care workers, warning that without immediate intervention, the situation could lead to tragic consequences.

## **Alberta**

Shortly after my last report, the United Conservative Party (UCP) government blatantly undermined workers' rights by forcing CUPE 2545 and CUPE 2559 to Alberta's Dispute Inquiry Board (DIB), preventing them from their Charter right to fair collective bargaining. Union leaders condemned the government's disregard for workers and their fight for better wages and conditions. Despite government interference, education workers in Fort McMurray protested wage restrictions that kept them living in poverty. CUPE leaders denounced the UCP's actions as an assault on workers' rights, with the government's-imposed wage directive preventing fair compensation for vital education staff.

CUPE members' political action game didn't relent this fall. In October, I joined several thousand public sector workers and labour movement allies in a massive rally in front of the Alberta Legislature to send a strong message to Premier Smith and the UCP government. While many public sectors continue, begin, or prepare to bargain with this hostile government, CUPE members and staff were there shoulder to shoulder to say that if Smith and the UCP want to cut back, we'll fight back!

CUPE members won't let the government's interference in collective bargaining by forcing mediation hold them down. They insist on being heard – and that was quite clear during one of the largest rallies in the city's history.

Approximately 200,000 workers in Alberta are currently bargaining with the UCP and most are calling for the same: better pay and working conditions. They need jobs that allow them to afford to live and stability over precarity if there is going to be any hope of retention across public sectors. Adequate funding of public services for communities across the province is necessary to not only ensure the quality of these programs and services, but also to ensure that we're not losing our workforce to threats of privatization.

We're outraged with the Alberta government's changes to the Alberta Investment Management Corporation (AIMCo) board, which violate the rights of pension plan members in the Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) and Public Sector Pension Plan (PSPP). The government's decision to replace joint governance with political control undermines pension security and independence, prioritizing political agendas over workers' and retirees' interests. Pension plan members deserve control over their retirement savings and the ability to manage their funds independently, not political interference.

## **British Columbia**

The British Columbia New Democratic Party (BC NDP) and John Rustad's Progressive Conservatives (PC) were virtually tied in the polls when British Columbians headed to the ballot boxes this fall. With a narrow but decisive victory in the final vote tally, Premier David Eby and his team formed government and will continue their efforts to make British Columbia a great place to call home. On behalf of CUPE members from coast to coast to coast, I offer congratulations to Premier Eby and the BC NDP on their re-election.

This election was a defining moment for CUPE members, as the future of public health care, childcare, and workers' rights were at risk. Throughout the campaign, CUPE members and staff took bold action to support candidates who championed the needs of working people, ensuring our collective voice resonated powerfully. As we look ahead, we are eager to continue to work with the BC NDP, pushing to ensure that our members' priorities – fair wages, improved working conditions, and robust public services – remain central to the government's agenda. A huge thank you to all who were so generous with their time and efforts to secure this win.

With many sectors across the province either in bargaining, or preparing to head to the table, it comes as a huge relief that CUPE members won't be negotiating with a right-wing government. We saw some great progress with the BC NDP at the helm and we are committed to assisting locals across the province achieve collective agreements that allow them to support their families while being safe on the job.

Less than a month after the triumph of the NDP win, November 12 brought us sad news with the passing of a true ally and trailblazer, John Horgan. John was first elected to the BC Legislature in 2005, before becoming Party Leader in 2017. He always prioritized the collective wellbeing of British Columbians and remained steadfast in his goal of making Canada's western-most province an example of what's possible when a progressive government is at the helm. His contributions to the betterment of those living, working, and learning in his province will be remembered as a great part of his legacy. I'm happy that John was able to see the re-election of his party, which will allow us to continue to build on his legacy. Rest in power, my friend.

The three provincially funded in-house childcare pilots operated by school districts in BC have resulted in the creation of over 50 new permanent CUPE positions in education assistant/childcare roles. Additionally, permanent full-time CUPE jobs have been created to support the program, including administrative, payroll, and family navigator positions. Expanding in-house childcare programming province-wide will significantly increase the number of full-time unionized jobs in BC's K-12 sector. The "Seamless Child Care Now" campaign will not only benefit parents across the province, but it is also a clear path to growing our union and creating more family-sustaining jobs in education and childcare.

Congratulations to CUPE North Area District Council, CUPE 1048, CUPE 399, and CUPE 3472 for coming together to host a great family friendly event with a night out at the hockey game in Prince George! Hundreds of members made it out on the first snowy night of the year, with the CUPE BC van also making its way there for the event. Activities like this are a reminder of the importance of connecting beyond the workplace to have fun together.

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

CUPE endorsed a new report released by the Hospital Employees' Union, which identifies key policies that helped protect vulnerable seniors in British Columbia's long-term care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report, *Long-Term Solutions for Long-Term Care*, offers a detailed blueprint of successful measures, including single-site orders, wage standardization, and tuition-free training for care aides. These policies not only helped reduce the spread of the virus, but also stabilized the long-term care workforce, a challenge faced by many other provinces. CUPE is urging all provincial governments to adopt these recommendations to improve the working conditions of health care workers and safeguard seniors nationwide.

Improving wages and working conditions for health care workers is directly linked to better care for seniors, as we have learned from BC's experience. With Canada's long-term care population set to double in the next decade, HEU and CUPE called for urgent action to implement the report's findings. They also highlighted the need for the federal government to include long-term care in Canada's universal public health care system, with sustained funding and national standards.

I was pleased to attend HEU's convention in Vancouver at the end of October, where the delegates were engaged and enthusiastic as they debated constitutional amendments and resolutions on a wide variety of important issues. Members also elected their Provincial Executive (PE) for the next two-year term. Congratulations to Barb Nederpel and Betty Valenzuela on their re-election as President and Financial Secretary, and congratulations to the 24 newly- and re-elected PE members. I wish everyone a successful next term in moving HEU forward and making gains for its members and British Columbians.

HEU President and CUPE Regional Vice-President Barb Nederpel spoke at the Inter-American Conference of Public Services International in Bogotá in November. Barb was part of a panel that included representatives of the National Women's Institute in Mexico, the PSI Inter-Americas Women's Committee, the Ministry of Equality of Colombia, and the PSI Secretary for the Andean Sub-Region. The panelists discussed how unpaid work falls to women and how care work is undervalued. Barb talked about how HEU faced the largest mass layoff of women workers under the BC Liberals and the impacts privatization has on women. She also highlighted some of our key victories, such as the reversal of privatization and wage increases in long-term care – two policies that have a significant positive impact on women workers in the care economy.

## **Airlines**

As the union representing more than 18,500 flight attendants across Canada, CUPE applauds the introduction of Bill C-415 by NDP MP Bonita Zarrillo, which aims to end the longstanding abuse of unpaid work in the airline industry. Currently, most airlines only pay flight attendants when the aircraft is in motion, forcing them to work up to 35 hours per month without compensation. Much of this unpaid work involves critical safety duties, yet flight attendants are left to perform these tasks without pay. The bill would require airlines to compensate flight attendants for all hours worked, ensuring they are fairly paid for the essential work they do.

CUPE's Airline Division has been at the forefront of the fight against this unfair practice, launching the "Unpaid Work Won't Fly" campaign in 2023 to raise awareness of the injustice. Flight attendants across the country have been very vocal about being forced to work for free, and CUPE is proud to see the NDP taking action with this legislation. The bill would set the necessary standard for fair pay, and CUPE is calling on the government and all opposition parties to support it and ensure it becomes law before the next election. CUPE won't relent until flight attendants are paid for every hour they work!

## **Organizing**

For the reporting period of October 1 to December 31, 2024, CUPE welcomed 874 new members in 16 bargaining units, including 364 in social services, 345 in education, and 81 in municipal services. There are currently 132 active campaigns underway that, if successful, could bring 44,292 new members to our union.

Our Atlantic region currently has four active campaigns in social services, health, and recreation, culture, and entertainment, which would see 399 new members join CUPE.

In the Maritimes, there are currently 12 active campaigns which could bring 638 workers into CUPE, including 262 in long-term care.

Quebec has 26 active campaigns underway in various sectors, that could bring 14,009 new members into the CUPE family.

The Ontario region continues its organizing efforts, with 30 active campaigns in various sectors that have the potential to add 7,117 new members to our union, including 2,557 in municipal services and more than 3,841 members in health care.

Manitoba has eight active campaigns, which could see 1,374 new members join our union, including 917 workers in education.

Saskatchewan has 13 active campaigns in various sectors, where we hope to bring 1,010 new workers into CUPE, 822 of which are education workers.

The Alberta region was busy with 13 active organizing campaigns that could bring in 7,127 new members into CUPE. Five of the ongoing campaigns are in the education sector where CUPE is hoping to add 6,577 members.

In British Columbia, there are 18 active campaigns across various sectors including social services, recreation, culture and entertainment, health, emergency and security services, education, and municipal services, with the potential of welcoming 12,618 new members.

## **In Memoriam/Personal**

### **Members**

Jean-Eudes Doiron	CUPE 1190 – New Brunswick
Martha Taylor	CUPE 1416 – Nova Scotia
Sarah Fairbrass	CUPE 374 – British Columbia

### **Retired Staff**

Danny Scheibli	National Representative, Oshawa Area Office
Catherine Bonnar	Secretary, Fraser Valley Area Office
Beverly Drane	National Representative, Hamilton Area Office

### **Fraternal**

Bill Lucy	Secretary-Treasurer Emeritus, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
John Horgan	Former Premier – British Columbia
Murray Sinclair	Senator and Indigenous Judge of the Manitoba Provincial Court

In solidarity,



MARK HANCOCK  
National President

:cmg-ceu