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NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT DECEMBER 2024 – MARCH 2025

Sisters, Brothers, and Friends:

As we turn the calendar page to welcome the New Year, it's an opportune time to set our sights on the work that paves the road ahead of us. I kicked off 2025 by addressing staff in their respective regions, alongside National Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick, to express our heartfelt thanks for their invaluable contributions over the past year, and to share our vision of what's to come.

I want to begin my first report of 2025 by recognizing that we are in unprecedented times, facing an existential threat to our country, and to our way of life.

Since the election of Donald Trump south of the border, we have been plunged into uncertainty and chaos. At the time of writing this report, we have had multiple tariff threats, some tariffs put in place, overt threats to the sovereignty of our country threatening to make us the 51st state, the spectre of a looming recession in the US which would have ripple effects in Canada, and a new Prime Minister in Canada.

On January 6, 2025, Justin Trudeau announced that he would be stepping down as Canada's Prime Minister and prorogued government until March 24. Since then, Mark Carney was elected the Liberal leader on March 14, 2025, and was sworn in as Canada's new Prime Minister.

There is every likelihood that a federal election will be called before March 24. Our union is ready and has spent months organizing and mobilizing our members from coast to coast to coast. We have political action coordinators in every region who are working with divisions and regional staff to implement regional plans that work in their local contexts.

We launched CUPE Votes, an online platform to engage CUPE members and activists leading up to this election, and I am proud to say that we have seen thousands of our members sign up to get involved.

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

Since Donald Trump's election and his threats to our country, we have also seen a resurgence of Canadian pride. I have been moved by how many of our members have taken action in so many creative ways to show their pride in being Canadian.

I was proud to sign the Pledge for Canada on behalf of CUPE in the first weeks of the Donald Trump presidency. The Pledge, an initiative of NDP Member of Parliament Charlie Angus and former clerk of the privy council Alex Himelfarb along with other leaders in our movement, calls for solidarity among Canadians and among our political leaders. It calls on our leaders to work across partisan divides and forcefully affirm and defend Canada's sovereignty.

While it is important to build a big tent for Canadian unity, we must be vigilant against those who are looking for a window of opportunity at this time of crisis to profit from our public institutions.

CUPE members, who are at the forefront of fighting privatization and corporate greed across the country, know this better than anyone else. This is why over 500 CUPE members attending the Building Strong Locals Conference in Montreal in March affirmed "The Montreal Declaration," which states:

We must respond to the threats against the things that make us proud to be Canadian by making them stronger – not by allowing them to be torn apart. We must reject the kneejerk calls for tax cuts, deregulation and privatization from corporate boardrooms and the right-wing.

Canada's response must put workers and our communities first.

We will defend our proud tradition of strong, well-funded, high-quality public services for people when they need it, and we will stand up for the right of all workers to good wages, a dignified retirement, and strong union representation. We will defend our sovereignty and our communities.

The Building Strong Locals Conference brought CUPE activists from across the country together to learn from each other and to sharpen their union skills. They participated in workshops about political action, conflict resolution, labour relations and more.

The conference followed on the heels of CUPE's first ever Young Workers Conference which saw young union activists prepare themselves to take CUPE into the future. Members at this conference talked about the union's role in fighting for affordable housing, the intersection between union activism and international solidarity, and the importance of the right to retire with dignity.

In February, I was invited by the then Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to attend the Canada-US Economic Summit along with 150 other leaders representing a cross section of Canadian civil society, soon after Donald Trump took office and began his destabilizing tariff threats. My message to the Prime Minister and to other Canadian leaders was clear – we need bold, progressive public solutions to protect our economy from the threat of Donald Trump's tariffs.

CUPE called on Canada to “Trump-proof” Canada’s economy by strengthening the public sector to absorb the economic shocks to come. We need income supports for workers through the Employment Insurance Work-Sharing program, expanding training opportunities, and establishing a youth job guarantee. We must direct the Canada Infrastructure Bank to protect public ownership of critical infrastructure, like transportation and energy. To prevent the outsourcing of Canadian jobs, particularly in telecommunications, we must make subsidies contingent on companies keeping their operations in Canada. Emergency nationalization of industries critical to the national interest must be on the table. None of this can be done without ensuring we honour our commitments to Indigenous peoples.

We are also calling on our movements to be vigilant in the calls to eliminate the so-called “inter-provincial trade barriers.” While there are some legitimate difficulties to interprovincial trade, such as transportation costs due to different requirements in different provinces, many of those challenges can be attributed to natural hurdles, such as Canada’s geography.

Those calling for the elimination of “trade barriers” are often calling, in fact, for removal of regulations that protect us, and for the mutual recognition of provincial standards which will trigger a race to the bottom as provinces try to eliminate protections to attract business investment. Indeed, the federal government has already removed more than half of exceptions in the Canada Free Trade Agreement that would have protected the federal government’s ability to regulate across industries such as telecommunications. This was a grave mistake, and CUPE has expressed alarm. We are advocating to the federal government to protect their ability to create regulations and protect Canadians through legislation.

This is why our response to the threats posed by Donald Trump cannot simply be “buy Canadian.” We cannot replace American billionaires with Canadian billionaires. Corporate Canada will wear whatever flag they need to if it means they can take a bit more from our members’ pockets to line those of their shareholders.

For me, Canadian pride is about protecting the Canadian model. Canadian pride, when we dig down, is pride in taking care of one another, pride in our public services. Free, high-quality health care, education, public pensions, and social programs that take care of the most vulnerable among us.

These are programs that the labour movement built with the NDP, the party that CUPE was a founding member of.

The first old age pension plan was established in 1932 by the federal government after JS Woodsworth forced them to. He was a trade unionist and later the first leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) which became the NDP. Public health care – It was Tommy Douglas who brought public health care to all Canadians by first bringing it to Saskatchewan as their NDP premier in 1962 with the support of the labour movement. The Canada Pension Plan (CPP) – It was Tommy Douglas again, as federal NDP leader holding the balance of power in a Liberal government, who forced its creation in 1965.

Today, Jagmeet Singh's NDP, holding the balance of power, fought for and won the largest expansion of the social safety net in a generation with the support of labour unions by forcing the federal government to pass anti-scab legislation and establish child care, pharmacare, and dental care coverage. I am proud of our union's support for this historic achievement.

Canadian values are union values. But when unions achieve our goals, our opponents strengthen their resolve. The Canadian model is under threat like never before.

Both Pierre Poilievre and Mark Carney believe in further privatization. Mark Carney's Liberals want to cut taxes for the wealthy and sell off our infrastructure to the highest bidder. Pension funds, which behave just like any other investor, are waiting in the wings for changes to rules that will allow them to invest and profit from infrastructure projects. Many of Canada's airports are already up for sale. Carney has spent much of his career further enriching some of the world's richest people as chairman of Brookfield Asset Management which profited off the privatization of public services.

Pierre Poilievre has voted against expanding the CPP and the Old Age Security (OAS), pharmacare, dental care, child care, and even marriage equality. He is a real estate investor, he has never walked a picket line and he qualified for a full pension at 32. It's no wonder that his response to the affordability crisis is to cut back on the very programs that are keeping ordinary Canadians afloat.

I want to briefly address CUPE's response to the affordability crisis. In 2024, the federal government announced that they would cut temporary resident levels in Canada to tackle the affordability crisis everyone was facing. In doing so, the federal government played right into the hands of racists and xenophobes who believe that immigrants are to blame for the affordability crisis that has gripped our country, and that our members feel every day.

CUPE condemned this immediately – International students and migrant workers are CUPE members across the public sector. International students and migrant workers are not causing the affordability crisis, they are victims of it just like everyone else. The cause of the affordability crisis is corporate greed, plain and simple.

We have been clear that international students have been treated like cash cows for universities, and have since been turned into scapegoats. As a result of these cuts, post-secondary institutions are cutting programs and jobs. We are advocating to the federal government to fund post-secondary institutions and reverse cuts to international student numbers.

Migrant workers under the temporary foreign worker program and the International Mobility Program are in Canada on closed work permits which tie their immigration status to their employer. Unlike Canadians and permanent residents, people working on closed work permits cannot leave an abusive employer easily to seek employment elsewhere without risking their ability to stay in Canada. The United Nations recently called this program a "breeding ground for contemporary forms of slavery."

CUPE has steadfastly supported calls to grant permanent residence on arrival for all, and to end the use of closed work permits. We have called for a war-time effort to build non-market housing in Canada, and to end the financialization of housing. We have called for universal pensions as a solution to the housing crisis so that homeowners do not have to rely on the value of their house to go up in order to have a dignified retirement.

We can build a Canada that puts workers first.

We have come together before as a union, and faced some significant challenges, internally, with difficult employers, and externally in politics. At every turn, we've shown time and again that we are not afraid to get out there and do the hard work that is needed to remain not only Canada's largest union, but it's the strongest one. The resilience and solidarity that CUPE is known for makes me so very proud to be your president in these unprecedented times.

We have never been stronger as a union, and we continue to grow from coast to coast to coast.

This is our moment. We must defend and strengthen the public services that previous generations have built and entrusted us to safeguard.

Collective Bargaining/Strikes/Lockouts

PROVINCE	LOCAL	EMPLOYER	# OF MEMBERS	STRIKE BEGAN	DURATION
Quebec	CUPE 2867	Town of Rivière-Rouge	47	December 4, 2024 (1 day)	Ongoing
Ontario	CUPE 1656	Region of Waterloo	220	March 3, 2025	Ongoing
Quebec	CUPE 4545	City of Laval	830	March 6-12, 2025 (6 days)	Ongoing
Saskatchewan	CUPE 2669	Saskatoon Public Library	258	November 12 and November 19, 2024 (2 days)	Ratified on December 6, 2024
Ontario	CUPE 905	City of Richmond Hill	220	November 22, 2024	December 11, 2024
Quebec	CUPE 2614	Société des arrimeurs de Québec (SAQ)	81	Locked out September 15, 2022	Return to work starting March 17, 2025, following an order from CIRB
Alberta	CUPE 2545	Fort McMurray Public School Board	605	November 13-14, 2024 (2 days) On strike from November 18, 2024	Ratified on March 17, 2025
Alberta	CUPE 2559	Fort McMurray Roman Catholic School Board	544	November 13-14, 2024 (2 days) On strike from November 18, 2024	Ratified on March 17, 2025
Alberta	CUPE 3550	Edmonton Public School Board	2337	January 13, 2025	Ratified on March 19, 2025
Alberta	CUPE 5543	Parkland School Division	405	February 25, 2025	Ratified on March 19, 2025
Alberta	CUPE 3484	Black Gold Regional Division	493	February 24, 2025	Ratified on March 19, 2025
Alberta	CUPE 40	Calgary Board of Education	782	February 21, 2025	Ratified on March 19, 2025

Alberta	CUPE 520	Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District	346	February 21, 2025	Ratified on March 20, 2025
Alberta	CUPE 4625	Sturgeon School Division	235	January 13, 2025	Ratified on March 20, 2025
Alberta	CUPE 5040	Foothills School Division	248	February 24, 2025	Ratified on March 21, 2025

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.

CUPE 1656 – Regional Municipality of Waterloo

Outside workers for the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, members of CUPE 1656, went on strike on March 3 after the employer back-tracked following a “calculation error” – returning to the table in the last days of bargaining with a wage offer significantly lower than had been previously tabled.

CUPE 4545

CUPE 4545 members, outside workers at the City of Laval, went on strike for six days to get some movement from the employer at the bargaining table. The collective agreement expired in 2022. The employer’s last offer was rejected by a 99.3% vote. Wages are the main bargaining priority in this round, and the local is fighting concessions around work organization.

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.

On December 6, 2024, they ratified a collective agreement which includes significant increases to circulation associate wages, sick leave improvement for circulation associates, improved protections against working alone, the establishment of a joint safety advisory committee to study and recommend best health and safety practices on an ongoing basis. Annual general wage increases for the five-year agreement are 3%-2%-2.5%-2.5%-3% retroactive to July 1, 2023.

CUPE 905 – City of Richmond Hill

After three weeks on the picket line, City of Richmond Hill outside workers, members of CUPE 905, ratified a new collective agreement that saw increases of 10.25% over three years along with market adjustments ranging from \$0.75-\$2.50.

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 but, in the meantime, had to comply. A back to work protocol was bargained and members will be returning to work progressively in the coming weeks.

Alberta Education Workers

CUPE 40, CUPE 520, CUPE 2545, CUPE 2559, CUPE 3484, CUPE 3550, CUPE 4625, CUPE 5040, CUPE 5543

Approximately 6,600 education workers in Alberta from nine different locals across the province went on strike to break the provincial wage mandate of 12% over four years. The coordinated bargaining effort was a challenge due to there not being a central table, but the nine CUPE locals maintained course with the help of the national bargaining policy and broke the mandate. As a result, some of the lowest-paid members will see wage increases of 29% over the life of their contract.

Regional Updates

Atlantic Region

Newfoundland and Labrador

After four and a half years in office, Andrew Furey stepped down as Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. His resignation came as a shock as those in the province had been speculating that an early election may be called. Furey stated the need to balance family along with timing for the next election as the reasons behind him putting an end to his career in politics. The announcement came within a week of Premier King's resignation from the role of premier in PEI.

With provincial and federal elections looming, we ramped up our political action game in the region with a series of election campaign workshops for CUPE members that highlighted the importance of what's at stake when we next head to the polls, and how to best have our voices heard.

In response to plans to renovate the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital to create much-needed long-term care space, which was unavailable in the new facility, CUPE is urging the health authority in the region to reconsider its plan to hire more agency nurses to fill long-term care beds in Corner Brook. We emphasized that this is not the solution to the ongoing staffing crisis. It's shameful that the government is backtracking on its promise to reduce reliance on travel nurses, a costly measure that has already drained over \$100 million.

CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador (CUPE NL) acknowledges the steps being taken to address the long-term care shortage but warns that hiring more agency staff could pave the way for privatization and contracting out services, affecting both workers and the community. We want long-term solutions that address the problems the government has created in the delivery of public services, not temporary measures that do not fix the problems.

CUPE NL made a final submission to the provincial government's Education Accord Advisory Team, signalling their withdrawal from the process over concerns that the Education Accord is set to dismantle the public education system in favour of privatization, at the expense of quality education for students and fair working conditions for education workers.

Last June, CUPE NL had recommended improvements such as fair compensation for workers, addressing violence in schools, better funding for schools in rural areas, and consistent union engagement. However, CUPE NL believes the Education Accord will divert public funds to private entities, worsening conditions for education workers and students. Education workers fear the same fate as they did with the Health Accord, where public funds were funnelled into private hands while health care workers faced burnout. CUPE stands in solidarity with the Memorial University of Newfoundland Faculty Association, which have also decided to withdraw their support for the Accord.

Nova Scotia

Child care workers in Nova Scotia are urging the newly elected government to invest in improving infrastructure in the sector, citing workload issues, understaffing, and affordability. CUPE 4745 and CUPE 3688 leaders emphasized the need for more support in child care centres and better working conditions. They also welcomed recent research showing the positive economic impact of the federal \$10-per-day child care program, which has created jobs and boosted wages. CUPE is calling on Premier Tim Houston to prioritize accessible, high-quality child care in the province.

After nearly a year of refusal, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) has finally agreed to meet with CUPE's eight locals representing school support staff to negotiate key provincial proposals at one common table. This victory is a direct result of our collective strength and solidarity through the Nova Scotia School Board Council of Unions. For months, the EECD obstructed progress and wasted our time by blocking movement on essential issues like wages at local bargaining tables. This achievement proves that when we unite, we are unstoppable.

We fought tirelessly to ensure that among top proposals on the provincial table were wages, term, job classification and reclassification, and violence in the workplace. A tentative agreement was reached, and ratification votes will be taking place shortly.

CUPE stands firmly against the government's plan to privatize mental health and addiction support services. There is an urgent need for better access to mental health care, but the solution is not funnelling public funds into private, for-profit companies. Workers in the sector are overwhelmed, with mental health professionals stretched thin and asking for support, only to see tax dollars diverted elsewhere.

CUPE questioned whether enough qualified private-sector clinicians exist to meet the demand and warned that this move would drain resources from the already strained public sector. The Houston government's plan to hire 250 private-sector clinicians, funded by taxpayer money, is a harmful move. Past experiences show that privatization leads to higher costs and poorer service, as private companies prioritize profit over people. We're urging the government to invest in the public health care system instead, ensuring quality care for Nova Scotians instead of private Chief Executive Officer's. Real solutions lie in strengthening public services, not privatization.

Maritimes Region

New Brunswick

I joined over 140 skilled trades workers in Fredericton in February, where members focused on addressing issues in the public sector trades and discussed ways to improve working conditions for these often-overlooked members. We heard from guest speakers and newly elected New Brunswick Premier Susan Holt, who committed to removing Bill 17 and promoting more positive labour relations. CUPE leaders in the province seized the opportunity to address the premier regarding challenges facing skilled trades workers. The summit underscored the need for fair wages, better working conditions, and greater involvement from tradespeople to push for change and fairness.

Labour leaders representing workers in New Brunswick applauded the renewed commitment to repeal the controversial law that forced a shift from defined benefit to shared-risk pension plans. CUPE 1253 and CUPE 2745, along with the New Brunswick Council of Nursing Home Unions (NBCNHU), launched legal action against the former Tory government, arguing that the law violated their collective agreements and infringed upon their right to free bargaining as protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

An ongoing legal battle has delayed the promised \$10,000 retention bonuses for approximately 1,000 Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) in nursing homes until a new agreement is signed. With the pledge to scrap the law, unions in New Brunswick are hopeful that progress can be made to reverse pension changes made through heavy-handed legislation.

CUPE is eager to see a repeal of the legislation, allowing for negotiations to resume and the retention bonuses to be issued. We've emphasized the importance of returning to fair bargaining for all workers and ensuring that the pension system serves workers' best interests. We will continue to advocate for better pension security, especially given the financial concerns that led to the pension dispute in the first place.

Prince Edward Island

CUPE Prince Edward Island (PEI) has strongly criticized the recent remarks by Health PEI Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Melanie Fraser, who suggested that privatizing health care services, such as the new private MRI clinic in Summerside, could offer value for money and quality care. CUPE argues that such privatization efforts are nothing more than quick-fix political moves that overlook the long-term harm to the public health care system. Private enterprises are less effective, equitable, and don't serve the community as well as public services do. Privatization would create a two-tiered system where wealthier individuals get faster care, while those relying on public services will face longer wait times and diminished access.

In response to Fraser's comments, CUPE joins other unions in emphasizing that privatization undermines the foundational principle of Canada's health care system: that services should be available based on need, not ability to pay. Private health care often lacks the transparency and accountability that public systems provide. Instead of resorting to privatization, CUPE is calling for greater investments in public sector health care workers, that include improved wages, and better working conditions, which would foster a more sustainable and equitable system that is accountable to the public.

On February 20, 2024, we learned of Dennis King's sudden decision to resign as Premier of Prince Edward Island, as well as stepping down from his leadership role with the PC Party and as an MLA. King also confirmed that he will not be seeking election to any future political office, ruling out a potential federal run. In the interim, MLA Rob Lantz is acting in the roles of Premier and Party Leader.

King's popularity had been steadily declining over the past few years, primarily due to growing concerns about the state of public health care on the Island. His so-called "innovative" solutions for addressing health care challenges were steps toward privatization, rather than meaningful investments in public health care. While King cited personal reasons for his resignation, including a desire to refocus on family and the mental health strain of his role, it's clear that his handling of health care and increasing scrutiny from Islanders played a significant role in his decision to step down.

CUPE 3324 is urging the PEI government to take over ambulance services from Medavie and run them publicly due to rising ambulance wait times and staffing shortages. Alarming data shows that many units remained down or unstaffed, leading to longer response times, especially in rural areas. Islanders deserve more accountability and transparency from the government, especially when services fail to meet demand.

Public services would be more effective in addressing these issues if private models were squashed. Firefighters in rural areas have also been bearing the brunt of the delays, and CUPE is advocating for the prioritization of ground ambulance services and an improvement to working conditions for paramedics.

Quebec

The Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) government once again demonstrated primary anti-union sentiment by introducing Bill 89 in February, titled "An Act to give greater consideration to the needs of the population in the event of a strike or a lock-out." The title is telling, it is a bill aimed at weakening unions by attacking their right to strike. Drawing inspiration from measures adopted by Justin Trudeau's federal government in the fall, which ended strikes in railroads, ports, and Canada Post through a simple letter from the Minister of Labour, the CAQ seeks to amend the Labour Code to grant itself the same power. Additionally, the CAQ wants to expand the notion of essential services to any strike that "disproportionately affects" the population or economy.

These brutal attacks on the right to strike are clearly contrary to the fundamental rights protected by both the Canadian and Quebec Charters. The concept of essential services is defined in international law and should be limited to preventing an imminent risk to the health or safety of the population.

Members of CUPE in Quebec are committed to opposing this bill and come the next election, they plan to vote the CAQ out— a right-wing, anti-union party.

The 22nd convention of Conseil provincial du secteur des communications (CPSC) brought together delegates from various businesses in the communications sector in Quebec. The CPSC represents more than 6,000 members working in television, telecommunications, print media, and film post-production.

Under the theme "*Résilience face aux changements*" the convention highlighted critical issues facing the sector, including the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on communication jobs. A conference on the topic opened the door to a period of exchanges where members reflected on strategies to ensure the sector's resilience against AI and the outsourcing of jobs abroad.

The convention also provided an opportunity to discuss new anti-strikebreaker (or lock-out) provisions that will take effect in June, as well as issues related to the federal elections. Since this sector is regulated by the federal government, these issues are particularly pressing.

Employers in the sector have undermined the jobs of our members in telecommunications in recent years, and the bloodbath is far from over. Despite enormous profits and significant subsidies from public funds, telecom companies are doing nothing to protect jobs in Canada.

For example, despite a net profit of \$375 million for 2024, Bell Canada announced job cuts amounting to 1,200 employees, including some newly created positions represented by CUPE 5407. It is the workers and artisans of French-language content who once again bear the brunt of an insatiable profit thirst and archaic regulations that have failed to modernize in the face of the invasion of giants such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney, and all the others.

On the Telus side, staff reductions will affect 571 people, including 85 of the union representing Telus employees in Quebec, CUPE 5044, and 86 members of the union representing Telus supervisory personnel, CUPE 5144 and 400 at the steelworkers across the country. Rimouski (Bas-Saint-Laurent) and Sainte-Marie (Beauce) will be the two cities most affected by these departures offers targeting office jobs. These Telus centres of expertise are essential economic drivers for these regions, but the company is seeking to disengage completely from Quebec under the pretext of "technological advances." However, its real goal is to replace unionized jobs with foreign jobs, to the detriment of Quebec know-how.

This outsourcing should concern us all in the current context of trade wars and the threats of annexation by the United States. Indeed, it is more important than ever to protect jobs here, but we must also protect our computer data from these threats. When telecommunications companies outsource our jobs abroad, it inevitably leads to the transfer of data and personal information overseas. Canadian laws are insufficient to protect us in this context. CUPE has already raised this issue with the government and intends to make it a key issue during the federal elections and beyond.

In the ground transportation sector, CUPE 5547, which represents the approximately 40 drivers at Autobus Yves Séguin et Fils, has signed its very first collective agreement. The company offers urban transport services for EXO, particularly in the cities of Sainte-Thérèse, Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, Bois-des-Filions, and Lorraine.

It took about ten meetings to reach an agreement. The agreement runs from March 2025 to June 30, 2027, and includes retroactive pay from July 2024, with salary increases of 12.45% over the course of the agreement. Members voted in favour of the agreement in principle by 92%.

Ontario

Doug Ford's call for an early election was seen as a self-serving move to distract from his failed leadership over the past seven years. Ford's record on health care, including worsening hallway medicine, a rise in emergency room closures, and the continued shortage of family doctors has led to a horrible decline in this vital sector. Housing and homelessness have also worsened under Ford's leadership, with little affordable housing being built and 80,000 people now homeless in Ontario.

The infamous Premier selfishly called the snap election in Canada's largest province more than 15 months early, costing taxpayers in the province well over \$150 million. Despite already having a majority in the legislature, Ford chose to take advantage of Trump's tariff threats, claiming a need for a "stronger mandate" to address the threats coming from south of the border. The end result at the ballot box was basically status quo, ending with his party back at the helm for another four years, with the Ontario NDP retaining Official Opposition, including a massive victory for CUPE's own Chandra Pasma in Ottawa West-Nepean. The election also saw the Ontario Liberal Party regain official party status.

CUPE and our more than 290,000 members in the province intend to hold Ford accountable during his renewed term and will be watching his every move.

The health care crisis in Ontario continues, with worsening overcrowding, significant wait times, and severe staffing shortages. Despite Ford's promise to end hallway medicine, 1,860 patients are now treated on stretchers in hospital hallways – up from 826 in 2018. Additionally, 2.5 million people are without a family doctor, and 250,000 are waiting for surgeries. The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU) has drawn attention to these failures by lining up gurneys at hospitals across Ontario, emphasizing that the lack of adequate funding and hospital beds is endangering patient safety and dignity, with patients often treated in hallways or storage spaces.

OCHU is advocating for real solutions to the health care crisis, including increasing hospital capacity, improving staff compensation, and returning health care services to the public, not-for-profit sector. We want an end to the privatization of services and the banning of agency nurses to reduce costs, and support the use of nurse practitioners to lead primary care clinics.

Predominantly female clerical workers at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto rallied for better wages, working conditions, and patient care. CUPE 5492 was vocal in stressing that staffing shortages create undue stress for workers and lead to delays in patient care. With an estimated 50 vacant position at the hospital, unacceptable wait times and frustrated patients are adding to the strain on staff. Wages at Mount Sinai are significantly lower than other hospitals, contributing to high turnover, and CUPE is calling for better compensation and conditions in ongoing collective bargaining.

A recent survey conducted by CUPE and the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU) revealed a severe crisis in Ontario's education system due to underfunding, which has led to widespread understaffing and unmet student needs. With over 12,000 respondents, the survey highlighted how inadequate staffing is impacting students and workers alike. Offices are overwhelmed, cleaning and repairs are delayed, and staff, such as educational assistants and child and youth workers, are frequently subjected to violence on the job. The Grand Erie District School Board alone has faced a \$31 million cut in funding this school year.

The underfunding crisis has resulted in dangerous and disruptive environments for both students and staff. Many education workers report experiencing violence daily. The staffing and resource shortages create an unsafe and inefficient learning atmosphere. Education workers across Ontario are calling on the government to urgently increase funding for school boards, properly staff schools, and address increasing violence in the workplace. The OSBCU represents more than 57,000 education workers across the province, and is demanding action to ensure safer, more effective learning and workspaces.

The Ontario government's decision to slash funding for essential programs like Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) is a clear display of its disregard for vulnerable families and its failure to support the most basic educational needs.

The abolishment of these child care services, which have supported newcomer families for over 25 years, will leave many parents unable to continue their language studies, further exacerbating the challenges marginalized communities already face. By cutting these essential services, the government is not only jeopardizing the futures of these children but also eroding their opportunity for equitable access to education.

Manitoba

In stark contrast to its neighbour to the east, the Manitoba Government announced funding increases for school divisions, providing more stable support for the coming year. CUPE applauds this positive step and remains committed to ensuring that individual school divisions receive the necessary resources to adequately support students and staff. Prioritizing support for students and education workers must remain a priority for school divisions, especially given the ongoing wage gap between rural and urban education support staff. Rural workers earn significantly less than their urban counterparts, and CUPE is pushing to right this wrong to bring education support staff in line with teachers.

CUPE is actively advocating for these issues with the province and has continued to raise them during budget consultations. With the new funding commitments and the ability for school divisions to levy additional resources, there is no reason not to restore vital jobs that were lost under previous government funding cuts. Jobs lost due to previous governments, including those in the library sector, must be reversed to ensure children have access to the services they need. CUPE remains dedicated to fighting for fair treatment, better wages, and job security for all education support workers.

On February 11, CUPE Manitoba President Gina McKay presented key priorities to the Manitoba Minister of Finance during the province's budget consultation, emphasizing the importance of investing in good, sustainable jobs for Manitobans, reversing privatization, and rejecting further outsourcing of public services. Critical issues like ending the use of agency staffing in health care, bringing IT and technical jobs back in-house, and addressing safety through community-driven approaches are top of mind for CUPE. We're also advocating for a pilot project for school-age child care, better pension plans for education support staff, and addressing wage disparities.

Health care support workers in Manitoba are optimistic about the government's decision to change leadership at Shared Health and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. We have long opposed replacing dedicated front-line health workers with private agency staff and welcome this shift in direction. We're looking to the new leadership to address the ongoing staffing crisis that has led to chronic understaffing in health care facilities, and had an impact on patient care and worker safety. CUPE is committed to standing up to ensure front-line workers receive the support and resources they need.

Members of CUPE 744 who work as maintenance staff in the St. James-Assiniboia School Division have been fighting for nearly three years to secure a fair contract, and after continued delays, they held an information picket outside the division office. While other groups have successfully signed agreements, maintenance workers feel disrespected and overlooked despite their crucial role in maintaining safe and clean schools. These workers are demanding recognition and a fair deal and will continue to push for the respect and contract they deserve.

Saskatchewan

The recent layoff of 80 educational assistants, members of CUPE 8443 in Saskatoon, has caused significant concern, especially regarding the disproportionate impact on Indigenous students. This situation stems from delays in the federal Jordan's Principle funding program, designed to address disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. Saskatchewan has the highest number of unprocessed claims, and the backlog is affecting schools across the region, leading to layoffs and disruptions.

In response, CUPE is calling on the provincial government to step in with immediate stopgap funding, similar to actions taken by other regions, to mitigate the harm caused by the funding delays. This underfunding is seen as a barrier to reconciliation and a setback for the progress of addressing inequities in the education system.

After seven days at the bargaining table, CUPE 342 successfully secured a new three-year contract with the City of Yorkton, effective through 2027. The agreement, which includes a significant wage increase of \$1.50 per hour starting in 2025 and a 3% raise for the following two years, reflects the hard work and dedication of the union members. The deal also includes incentives for employees to pursue additional certifications, enhancing safety and efficiency in city services.

CUPE 2669 members, who count approximately 270 library workers in Saskatoon, voted in favour of a tentative agreement that addresses some key issues raised during negotiations, including improved health and safety measures and wage increases to match the rising cost of living. We're proud of our members' success in securing better wages and safer working conditions. This agreement is a considerable step forward in ensuring libraries remain safe for these vital workers and the community they serve. The deal includes substantial wage increases for circulation associates, bringing their pay closer to the rates of Regina Public Library workers. Other gains include better sick leave provisions and enhanced support for workers in need of time off due to illness. The agreement also includes greater protections for working alone. There is also a commitment to establish a joint safety advisory committee to continuously review and recommend best practices for health and safety across the library system.

Nearly 200 delegates met in Regina to attend the annual Division Convention. Delegates came together to debate resolutions, and they heard from a number of speakers on topics such as Occupational Health and Safety, Artificial Intelligence, and the fight for queer rights. Carla Beck, leader of the official opposition, gave a rousing speech, followed by a recommitment of the delegates to the provincial NDP.

Saskatchewan is one of two provinces that have not signed on to the \$10-a-day child care initiative of the federal government. I joined Candace Rennick and Kent Peterson, along with Sue Delanoy from Child Care Now for a press conference on the urgency for Saskatchewan to sign on to the extension to the federal child care funding agreement.

While in Saskatchewan, I met with executive members from CUPE 5430. I was invited to join their telephone town hall meeting which reached over 2,500 members, to bring a message of solidarity and support as they work their way through a difficult round of bargaining.

Alberta

CUPE has demonstrated exemplary solidarity in the region, as some 6600 education workers across Alberta across nine locals coordinated their bargaining and won despite the government's efforts to undermine them. At the time of writing, six out of the nine locals had tentative agreements and two had ratified. Some of the lowest paid workers will see wage increases of approximately 29% over the life of their agreement.

CUPE Alberta responded to a recent smear campaign from the UCP government, refuting claims made by the government, emphasizing that the government, despite claiming not to be involved in bargaining with education support workers, has been actively commenting on the issue.

Alberta has the lowest per capita education funding in Canada and called for the government to focus on addressing the root issues rather than engaging in negative campaigns.

A recent survey revealed strong support for striking education workers in Alberta, including surprising backing from United Conservative Party (UCP) supporters. The survey, which included 1,002 Albertans, showed that a majority of UCP supporters side with the striking workers, highlighting the public's growing concern over the government's neglect of education funding and the poor wages of education workers. This support shows Albertans understand the need for workers to fight for better conditions in classrooms, and parents and community members are rallying behind them. In health care, the UCP government's firing of the Alberta Health Services' CEO is the latest scandal to plague the sector. The dismissal is speculated to have been further to the UCP learning that the former CEO had planned to approach the RCMP with evidence of special deals given to friends of the UCP.

British Columbia

CUPE BC welcomed the provincial government's commitment with the federal government to extend the child care bilateral agreements until 2031. This long-term investment means more affordable, high-quality child care, better wages and support for early childhood educators, and stronger communities across British Columbia. This is a big step forward for working families and the future of child care in the province, and hopefully will serve as a model for other provinces to follow.

Northern BC is facing a severe shortage of paramedics, particularly in rural and remote communities, with Prince George also feeling the strain. Chronic understaffing and changes to overtime scheduling are exacerbating the situation, resulting in longer wait times, especially for non-life-threatening calls. CUPE 873 has pointed out that many areas have only 50% staffing coverage, and rural communities struggle the most with filling paramedic positions. Despite the province's attempts to address the issue by adding more positions, nearly 400 vacancies remain unfilled, contributing to burnout and increasing pressure on the remaining staff.

CUPE has flagged concerns about the impact of these shortages on paramedics, citing the difficulty of maintaining proper care when ambulances sit empty and remaining paramedics are overworked. We do not support the practice of using firefighters and nurses to fill gaps in paramedic coverage, as this area of responsibility should remain with trained paramedics. Without addressing the root causes of the shortage, the safety of both paramedics and the communities they serve continue to be at risk.

The BC Minister of Public Safety recently confirmed that an independent study and investigation will be conducted into the governance, financial and operational effectiveness of E-Comm and 911 provision in the province. The Minister said the decision was prompted by consistent and ongoing concerns raised by stakeholders. CUPE 8911, Emergency Communications Professionals of BC, represents over 700 frontline 911 operators, dispatchers, and support staff and had been raising concerns for years about chronic underfunding, understaffing, and governance issues. This review is a critical step toward building a reliable, fully resourced 9-1-1 system that British Columbians can count on in emergencies, and CUPE 8911 will share front line workers' knowledge about the issues.

CUPE 410, which represents Greater Victoria library workers, has raised serious concerns about the increase in threatening and violent incidents in local libraries. Last year, the library system saw 732 incident reports filed across its 12 branches, a 200 per cent increase from 2021. Library workers have seen a surge in mental health challenges from the public they serve, contributing to heightened incidents of aggression and disruption. This comes at a time when the library system is facing critical staff shortages. A combination of challenges union officials warn are taking a toll on staff and patrons. With a 20% vacancy rate across the system, workers are under great stress, impacting their mental health and wellbeing.

The growing expectations placed on library staff, who are not trained social workers but are being tasked with handling increasingly complex situations is concerning. Local leaders have emphasized that the responsibility to address these issues should fall to the provincial government and mental health services, not library workers. Libraries are meant to be safe, educational spaces. CUPE will continue to advocate for solutions that protect both workers and patrons.

CUPE members are sounding the alarm over School District 73's proposal to replace Certified Education Assistants (CEAs) with undertrained, underqualified 'Responsible Adults' in Kamloops schools. CUPE 3500 represents over 900 school support workers, who maintain that this move undermines qualified school workers and threatens the quality of support for over 16,000 students. CEAs are highly trained professionals with years of education and ongoing training, essential for meeting the complex needs of students, especially those with learning challenges – and we won't allow them to be replaced without a fight.

The district's proposal, requiring minimal training for these replacements, is seen as a temporary fix to a much deeper issue: the shortage of qualified CEAs due to low wages and poor working conditions. Addressing the root causes of staffing shortages, such as improving working conditions and wages, is crucial and will help attract and retain the skilled professionals needed to support students effectively and sustainably.

Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)

The Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) is urging the federal government to revise its Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) to prevent the deportation of essential health care support workers in British Columbia (BC). With the province already grappling with critical staffing shortages, HEU notes that recent changes to the PNP have put thousands of workers at risk at a time when they are needed most. HEU called for immediate action, stressing that these workers play an indispensable role in patient care, and the government must ensure they can remain in Canada to continue their vital work.

Since 2022, many health care workers on visas have been accepted into the PNP, but cuts to immigration targets and changes in program criteria have significantly reduced the number of available spaces in BC. This leaves hundreds of experienced support workers (care aides, housekeepers, dietary aides, and clerical staff) facing fears of deportation, a threat that could impact hospital operations. In regions like Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal, over 500 HEU members are at risk this year alone. These workers have shown unwavering dedication to the health care system, and their loss would make it even harder for BC hospitals to deliver the care patients need.

On February 21, collective bargaining began between the nine-union Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) and the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC), covering over 60,000 health care workers across the province. The Hospital Employees' Union represents over 90% of them. The union is determined to fight for better working and caring conditions, focusing on increasing frontline staffing, ensuring safer workplaces, and addressing injury rates. Despite some improvements in recent years, chronic staffing shortages continue to affect workers' ability to provide the best care for patients. Better working conditions are essential for a high-quality health care system.

The FBA is also pushing for wage grid improvements based on the findings from the 2023-2024 wage comparability review that was undertaken by representatives of government, health employers and the FBA. These are needed to correct the historical wage inequities caused by the BC Liberal wage rollbacks in 2004. The goal is clear: health care workers deserve equal pay for equal work and should be compensated fairly for the vital role they play in BC's health care system.

Airlines

2025 is a major year for bargaining for members in airlines. Air Canada members are mobilized and ready to fight for a new collective agreement. The "Unfair Canada" campaign, organized by CUPE's Air Canada Component, highlights the issue of unpaid work for flight attendants. Featuring interactive pop-up events in cities like Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto, the campaign creatively addresses the challenges flight attendants face, aiming to raise awareness and advocate for fair compensation. These pop-ups offer a satirical look at potential airline service changes, such as passengers standing, smaller drink servings, and stricter carry-on rules, while encouraging visitors to send e-mails to Air Canada demanding fair pay for flight attendants.

The campaign specifically targets the problem of flight attendants not being compensated for crucial tasks like boarding, deplaning, and safety checks. Currently, flight attendants are only paid during flight time, with hours spent on the ground remaining unpaid. Through these pop-up experiences, the campaign encourages public engagement to garner support for ending this unfair practice and pushing Air Canada to address these labour concerns. Ultimately, the goal is to secure proper pay for all hours worked and improve the working conditions for flight attendants.'

This year will also be a bargaining year for CUPE members working for WestJet, which includes WestJet mainline, WestJet Encore, Sunwing as well as Swoop. CUPE 8125 now represents these members and is gearing up for an important year of collective bargaining.

CUPE's Airline Division is collaborating with the Global Cabin Air Quality Executive (GCAQE) to offer CUPE members access to the Global Cabin Air Reporting System (GCARS). This initiative allows members to report incidents of contaminated cabin air, such as fume events or the "dirty sock" smell, through an e-form developed by the GCAQE. While this system does not replace the reporting processes at individual airlines, it helps track the number and types of these events, providing valuable data for advocacy and safety improvements.

By submitting reports through GCARS, flight crew members can contribute to a more accurate understanding of cabin air quality issues, as a tool to track patterns and advocate for stronger safety standards, training, and protections for flight crews. The information submitted is confidential, with copies sent to both the GCAQE and CUPE's Health and Safety Branch. This partnership strengthens efforts to lobby the federal government for better safety regulations and accountability in the airline industry. Members are still required to follow their air carrier's standard reporting procedures in addition to submitting the GCARS form.

Organizing

For the reporting period of January 1 to March 31, 2025, CUPE welcomed 1,446 new members in 17 bargaining units, including 561 in health, 355 in social services, and 285 in education. There are currently 138 active campaigns underway that, if successful, could bring 56,764 new members to our union.

Our Atlantic region currently has one active campaign in municipal services, which would see 36 new members join CUPE.

In the Maritimes, there are currently 11 active campaigns which could bring 1,086 workers into CUPE, including 380 in emergency and security services.

Quebec has 28 active campaigns underway in various sectors, that could bring 17,595 new members into the CUPE family.

The Ontario region continues its organizing efforts, with 26 active campaigns in various sectors that have the potential to add 14,252 new members to our union, including 6,983 in health care and 5,649 members in municipal services.

Manitoba has 13 active campaigns, which could see 2,111 new members join our union, including 1,346 workers in education.

Saskatchewan has 12 active campaigns in various sectors, where we hope to bring 1,007 new workers into CUPE, 887 of which are education workers.

The Alberta region was busy with 13 active organizing campaigns that could bring in 7,553 new members into CUPE. Six of the ongoing campaigns are in the education sector where CUPE is hoping to add 7,139 members.

In British Columbia, there are 20 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 13,615 new members.

In Memoriam/Personal

Members

Amanda Fawcett

CUPE 4701 – Manitoba

Brian Biggers

CUPE 4370 – Ontario

Moorease “Moe” Scott

CUPE 4174 – Saskatchewan

Shaun Scully

CUPE 416 – Ontario

Retired Staff

Patricia Mack
Valley Area Office

National Representative – Comox

David Werlin

Regional Director – Alberta

Philomena “Ena” O’Brien

Staff of CUPE 416 – Ontario

In solidarity,

Handwritten signature of Mark Hancock in black ink.

MARK HANCOCK
National President

:sg/ceu