

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT SEPTEMBER 2022 – DECEMBER 2022

Sisters, Brothers, and Friends:

Across the country this fall, CUPE leaders, members and staff have been busy doing what we do best – advocating for our members at grievance meetings and at the bargaining table, pushing back against governments with austerity agendas, protecting public services against funding cuts and privatization, and fighting to protect human rights and our fundamental rights as workers.

As we head into winter, I know that important work will continue. I hope you are also able to take some time to rest and recuperate over the holiday season. Because there is every indication that 2023 will be just as busy as 2022 has been, and we have more critical work ahead of us.

National Sector Council Conference

It was great to spend time with the more than 700 CUPE members who gathered in Ottawa at the beginning of October for our first in-person national event in three years. The conference opened with a moving Indigenous blanket ceremony to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This was followed by a session on bystander intervention, which helped set a tone of inclusivity and respect for the conference. Members had a chance 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 on topics including fighting inflation without weakening workers, safer union spaces, and resisting the threat of privatization.

All-Committees Meeting

Members of CUPE's eighteen National Committees gathered in Vancouver from November 1 to 3. The All-Committees meeting is an opportunity for our committees to hear, together, about the priorities of the National Union and incorporate them into their work. It also allows for members to connect with other committees about shared interests and issues. I wasn't able to be there in person but was thankful that technology allowed me to join the meeting virtually. I was sorry to miss a keynote presentation from former CUPE member and national representative Rachna Singh, who is now a BC NDP MLA and cabinet minister.

Division Meetings and Conventions

I had several other opportunities to meet with our activists and leaders across the country, and while I do miss the more personal interactions that come with in-person events, I also appreciate the opportunity to join these meetings virtually when the logistics of travelling across this big country make it otherwise impossible to attend.

Two of our divisions held conventions in October – the Hospital Employees' Union (HEU), our health services division in British Columbia, and CUPE Manitoba. While I couldn't join the HEU convention in person, I did get to spend a couple of days with our Manitoba members at their convention in Winnipeg. I congratulate NEB members Barb Nederpel and Gina McKay on the success of their respective conventions.

In November I was also able to join All-Presidents meetings hosted by CUPE PEI and CUPE Saskatchewan. Both provided an important opportunity to connect with our leaders doing important work in their regions. And in December, it was a privilege to join our Quebec members in Trois-Rivieres for important discussions at a Human Rights Conference hosted by SCFP-Quebec.

Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

I continue to work closely with the officers of the CLC on the important issues facing workers in Canada.

This fall, that work has included participating in CLC-led discussions with affiliates about greater collaboration on organizing efforts, especially as it relates to pushing back against employer-friendly unions like the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) and the National Organized Workers Union (NOWU). CLAC and NOWU focus their efforts on raiding members from other unions, instead of organizing workers who do not already have representation, and negotiating inferior collective agreements that undermine our own bargaining efforts.

The CLC has also taken the lead on many legislative initiatives with the federal government in the past year. Most recently, that work has focused on coordinating union participation in government consultations on long-awaited federal anti-scab legislation.

As part of the Supply and Confidence Agreement between the NDP and Liberals reached in the spring, the government has committed to adopting legislation that would ban the use of “replacement workers” in labour disputes in federally-regulated sectors. Both the NDP and Bloc Quebecois have tried to pass such legislation many times over many years, and their attempts have always been foiled by Liberal opposition. The CLC has ensured the labour movement is unified in our position and our messaging through the consultation process. We look forward to seeing the legislation early in the new year, with the hope it will be adopted in the spring session of parliament.

International Solidarity

In September, CUPE hosted a Public Services International (PSI) meeting for representatives of affiliated unions from Canada and the United States. I co-chaired the hybrid meeting with Jan Hochedal from the American Federation of Teachers. PSI President Rosa Pavanelli joined the meeting remotely and updated us on the work PSI is doing across the globe, while staff provided updates on PSI campaigns and the political landscape across the Americas. It was also an important opportunity to hear updates from our US allies, and for them to hear reports from Canadian public sector unions. As always with our international work, the meeting was a good reminder that the challenges workers face in Canada are very much the same as those faced by workers elsewhere in the world.

With international travel once again being viable, we have been able to do more of our international solidarity work in person. Staff attended a steering committee meeting of the Mexico Labour Solidarity Project in Mexico, alongside representatives of Canadian and US unions this fall. CUPE also participated in a conference hosted by the Trinational Coalition to Defend Public Education, and a delegation to Cuba led by CoDevelopment Canada.

I had every intention of joining the Canadian Labour Congress delegation at the fifth World Congress of the International Trade Union Confederation in November. I was not able to make the trip but we were well-represented by staff who participated in formal and informal meetings and caucuses with worker representatives from labour organizations around the world. We also shared with congress delegates the story of the fight undertaken by the Canadian labour movement this fall to protect our fundamental rights as workers, a fight led by our education workers in Ontario.

Picket lines and Protests

In my years as a CUPE member, I have attended many a protest and have been on more picket lines than I can count. But it has been a very long time since I've seen the kind of solidarity action that took place in Ontario this November.

Despite their rhetoric praising frontline public sector workers as heroes in the early days of the pandemic, we knew that right-wing governments would turn on us. We knew they would find or manufacture an economic crisis and use it as an excuse to attack public services and deny the workers who deliver them fair collective agreements. That is exactly where we find ourselves now. Nearly everywhere, governments are on the attack.

This is the struggle our union was up against in Ontario, with Doug Ford's Conservative government.

More than 55,000 education workers were determined to fight for their first meaningful wage increase in many years. They prepared for bargaining well in advance, and the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU) served notice to bargain in June. Months earlier they had begun an internal campaign where local leaders engaged their members in direct conversations about bargaining.

The Ford government refused to negotiate; the union sought a strike vote. The OSBCU approached this strike vote like we would a campaign (electoral or otherwise) and reached out to education workers across Ontario. This paid off with amazing results. More than 82% of our members participated in the vote, and in early October they gave their bargaining committee a 96.5% strike vote.

After several more attempts to reach an agreement, OSBCU served notice that they would exercise their right to strike, beginning on November 4.

Doug Ford responded to the strike notice by introducing Bill 28. The legislation imposed a new four-year contract with inadequate wages and concessions and removed the right to bargain local issues. It made strike action illegal, punishable by \$4,000 fines per worker per day and \$500,000 per day for the union. And because the government knew the legislation was unconstitutional, they removed our right to challenge it by invoking the notwithstanding clause.

It is the most draconian piece of anti-worker legislation I have ever seen.

In the face of this legislation, our members vowed to continue their fight. Our National Executive Board were steadfast in their solidarity with and absolute support for our members and workers' rights. Many of them made plans to travel to Ontario to join our protests.

Union leaders across the country were outraged. They sent messages of support and solidarity, and pledged logistical and financial support. They called out the government, publicly and privately, for their egregious attack on our fundamental right to strike and to free and fair collective bargaining.

Members of the Ontario NDP vocally opposed the bill, with many of them being removed from the legislature during debate. Along with other opposition members, the NDP caucus did everything they could to prolong debate and stall adoption of the bill. But the government used every trick in the parliamentary play book to push the bill through the provincial legislature. It received royal assent late on November 3.

The next day, our members courageously walked off the job anyway, to demand that their fundamental and constitutional rights as workers be respected.

Our union family was there for us. They joined our members at protests in communities across Ontario. Under the leadership of the Canadian Labour Congress and the Ontario Federation of Labour, labour leaders planned escalating actions in all sectors of the economy – including a commitment to a general strike.

We were going to raise hell, and Doug Ford knew it.

Bill 28 received became law on a Thursday night and Doug Ford was at a microphone to announce he would rescind the legislation first thing Monday morning. No government has ever scrapped its own legislation in such short order.

It will take a while to dissect everything that has happened in connection with this dispute and uncover all the things we have learned.

We know we need to have a conversation about the use of the notwithstanding clause, and we know that other governments will learn from the mistakes Doug Ford made in Ontario. We also know that our rights are fragile and are under attack.

But we also know that solidarity works and that we can be an incredibly powerful force when we join together. And we know how vital it is for us to stand up and defend our bargaining rights.

Our collective power to bargain for better jobs and a better life for workers isn't just about us, it's also about preserving the foundational pillars of our society like human rights, universal health care and public education.

Our members, our union, and our movement put Doug Ford and every other premier across Canada on notice: we're organized, and if you dare try to undermine our rights, we're ready to fight.

Collective Bargaining/Strikes/Lockouts

Strikes and Lockouts

Ontario Education Workers

Following two days of political protests and strike action in early November and Premier Ford's commitment on November 7 to rescind Bill 28, OSBCU returned to the bargaining table to negotiate on behalf of more than 55,000 education workers.

Bill 28 was rescinded on November 14. With the assistance of a mediator, a tentative collective agreement was reached on November 20, 2022.

OSBCU was able to fight off all concessions and made significant gains for our members, including a \$1.00 per hour wage increase in each year of the four-year agreement. Achieving a flat rate increase was a priority for the OSBCU in order to help our lowest paid members.

The agreement was ratified on December 5 with the support of 73% of the more than 41,000 members who voted.

CUPE 5454

CUPE 5454, employees of the Société Québécoise du Cannabis (SQDC) have now been on strike for over 200 days, since May 17, 2022.

Members are calling for salaries and benefits similar to those working in other comparable state corporations, including the Quebec Liquor Corporation.(SAQ).

These SQDC workers barely earn \$17/hour upon hiring and the majority have no full-time position or job security, which puts them in an untenable precarious position. Yet these striking members are responsible for informing and educating consumers on how to minimize the impact of cannabis on their health, which is the official mandate of the SQDC. They would like their remuneration to reflect this.

CUPE 2614

On September 15, the Société des arrimeurs de Québec locked out 81 longshore workers, who at the time were negotiating clauses to protect work/life balance. The employer maintains its request to have employees work 12-hour shifts, but our members do not want these types of schedules. Like everywhere else, the Port of Quebec struggles with staffing shortages and the employer is determined to put the burden of this situation on the backs of the stevedores.

CUPE 2614 members are concerned about health and safety within their workplace and are speaking out about the dangerous conditions of the wharves and the inaction on the part of the port authorities and the federal government towards fixing them.

The wharves have deteriorated due to a lack of investment in infrastructure. The wharves have been neglected in federal budgets for the past few years, and members want this addressed to ensure that every member gets home safely at the end of their shift.

CUPE 3912

CUPE 3912 representing approximately 1,500 members that work as teaching assistants, part-time academics, markers, demonstrators, and clinical markers at Dalhousie University, was on strike for 24 days this fall.

For many years, wage increases have not kept up with the cost of living. The employer offered a wage increase that was well below inflation prior to the commencement of the strike. Wage parity was also an issue for teaching assistants, who are some of the lowest paid in the U15 (Canada's top research universities). The new agreement, ratified on November 11, 2022 includes:

- A course contract wage increase of 23 per cent over four years for new part-time academic instructors.
- An hourly pay rate increase of 23 per cent over four years for all teaching assistants.
- An hourly pay rate increase of 44 per cent over four years for both markers and demonstrators.
- Full payment to members for their fall 2022 contracts with the employer.

CUPE 3906

CUPE 3906, comprised of 2,800 teaching and research assistants at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario went on strike on November 21, 2022 following an impasse in negotiations.

The union's key proposals include wage increases, extended funding and guaranteed work, protection against wages being lost to tuition increases in the form of reimbursements, and closing the pay gap between graduate and undergraduate assistants.

Teaching and Research Assistants deserve a fair and reasonable collective agreement that provides them with meaningful financial security to ensure their academic success.

Far from being fair and reasonable, the agreement that McMaster has offered its TAs and RAs – who have already suffered immensely under three years of wage restraint legislation – puts them further behind.

CUPE 1690

The collective agreement between CUPE 1690 and the Municipality of Ste. Julie expired on December 31, 2021. In March 2022, the members voted 99% in favour of strike action as a signal of support to their bargaining committee, and to put pressure on their employer. On December 6, these blue and white collar workers held a day-long strike in an effort to move negotiations forward. These members want real wage increases to catch up with workers in other municipalities. Given the current rate of inflation, fair remuneration is more important than ever. Hopefully the employer received that message loud and clear, and we will reach an agreement soon.

| PROVINCE | LOCAL | EMPLOYER | # | STRIKE BEGAN | STRIKE ENDED |
|----------|-------|---|------|----------------------|--------------|
| QC | 5454 | Société Québécoise du Cannabis | 300 | 20-May-22 | Ongoing |
| QC | 2614 | Société des arrimeurs de Québec | 81 | Lockout 15-Sep-22 | Ongoing |
| NS | 3912 | Dalhousie University | 1500 | 19-Oct-22 | 11-Nov-22 |
| ON | 16 | Algoma District School Board | 175 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 27 | Greater Essex County District School Board | 305 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 65 | Northwest Catholic District School Board, Rainy River District School Board | 331 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 218 | Durham Public School Board, Durham Catholic District School | 4000 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 256 | Wellington Catholic District School Board, Upper Grand District School Board, Caretaking Norwell Paul Metzger | 330 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 895 | Rainbow District School Board No. 3 | 225 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 997 | Trillium Lakelands District School Board | 700 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1011 | Halton District School Board | 375 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1022 | Hastings & Prince Edward District School Board | 747 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1165 | Employees Of Near North District School Board Et Al | 315 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1176 | Bluewater District School Board | 260 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1196 | York Region District School Board Employees | 1175 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |

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|----|------|--|------|-----------|-----------|
| ON | 1202 | Renfrew County Catholic District School Board | 54 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1238 | Lambton/Kent District School Board | 1000 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1247 | Renfrew County District School Board | 130 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1310 | Simcoe County District School Board | 500 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1317 | The Niagara Catholic District School Board | 950 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1321 | Renfrew County District School Board | 110 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1328 | Toronto Catholic District School Board Employees | 2070 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1348 | Greater Essex County District School Board | 240 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1358 | Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board | 600 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1369 | Sudbury Catholic District School Board Employees | 56 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1453 | Peterborough Victoria Northumberland & Clarington Catholic District School Board | 850 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1479 | Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board | 950 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1480 | Limestone District School Board | 1250 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1483 | Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board | 760 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1571 | York Catholic District School Board Employees | 516 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1628 | The Peel District School Board | 1200 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1734 | York Region District School Board | 3300 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 1939 | Keewatin-Patricia District School Board | 83 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 2026 | Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board | 500 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 2331 | York District Catholic School Board | 1800 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 2357 | Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board | 2054 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 2486 | Lakehead District School Board | 147 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 2512 | Waterloo Catholic District School Board | 1200 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |

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|----|------|---|------|-----------|-----------|
| ON | 2544 | The Peel District School Board | 1350 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 2799 | Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board, Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord | 113 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 3155 | Toronto Catholic District School Board | 70 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 3166 | Halton Catholic District School Board | 430 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 3396 | Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board | 1030 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 3447 | Bruce Grey County Roman Catholic Separate School Board Employees | 400 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 3615 | Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board | 187 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 3987 | Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board | 194 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4148 | Employees Of The Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board And Soo Arena Association | 510 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4153 | Hamilton-Wentworth D.S.B. - Custodial | 550 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4154 | English Catholic District Sb Of Eastern Ontario - Board #52 | 721 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4155 | Conseil scolaire de district des écoles françaises de l'Est Ontarien #65 | 255 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4156 | District School Board Of Niagara | 1725 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4168 | St. Clair Catholic District School Board | 610 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4186 | London District Catholic School Board | 1000 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4222 | Thames Valley District School Board | 1845 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4274 | Conseil scolaire catholique du Nouvel Ontario | 80 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4297 | Le conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est | 150 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4299 | Conseil scolaire de district des écoles catholiques du Sud-Ouest | 800 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4340 | Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud | 180 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |

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|----|------|---|-------|-----------|-----------|
| ON | 4400 | Toronto District School Board | 16244 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4681 | The Northeastern Catholic District School Board | 154 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 4865 | Conseil scolaire publique du Nord-Est de l'Ontario | 247 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 5100 | Grand Erie District School Board | 950 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 5200 | Halton Catholic District School Board | 1050 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 5335 | Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario | 450 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 5476 | York District Catholic School Board | 19 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 5555 | The Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board | 1943 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 5678 | Upper Canada District School Board #26 | 1480 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 7575 | Thames Valley District School Board, Educational and Instructional Assistants | 1766 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 7777 | Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières | 100 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 8888 | District School Board Ontario North East | 175 | 04-Nov-22 | 08-Nov-22 |
| ON | 3906 | McMaster University | 2800 | 21-Nov-22 | Ongoing |
| QC | 1690 | Municipality of Ste-Julie | 176 | 6-Dec-22 | Rotating |

Collective Bargaining

A strike has been averted at the University of Toronto, where 700 full-time and part-time front-line service workers of CUPE 3261 have secured a tentative agreement that contains important gains.

The agreement includes meaningful improvements on pathways to good jobs for members and for the local's future. While the agreement does not guarantee limits to contracting out jobs to for-profit operators, one of the union's key proposals, it includes significant steps in the right direction. Working with their membership and support from allies, CUPE 3261 was able to expose the ways in which contracting out increases poverty-level wages, worsens services, and cuts important benefits. CUPE 3261 is building a strong base for future bargaining in which they plan to make even greater gains in protecting work of the bargaining unit.

Regional Updates

Maritimes Region

New Brunswick

This year, Truth and Reconciliation was properly celebrated on September 30 in New Brunswick. Thanks to the diligent activism of Indigenous communities, public pressure, and unions, Premier Higgs had no choice but to recognize Truth and Reconciliation Day as an official provincial holiday. CUPE 1252, representing over 9,000 healthcare workers in New Brunswick, was successful in its grievance to have September 30 recognized by government. Back in 2021, Premier Higgs had flatly refused to do so. CUPE NB stood in solidarity with the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqey, and Peskotomuhkati nations, whose traditional lands are in the Maritime provinces. Truth and Reconciliation Day is important in helping heal the wounds of the past.

The Higgs government is getting ready for another round of negotiations marked by confrontation: they introduced a bill to enact stricter rules on how public sector strikes are conducted.

The legislation would give government the power to use scabs to do essential work during a labour dispute, including with replacement workers. Employers will have more leeway to change the work schedules of essential workers, something they are restricted from doing under the current *Public Service Labour Relations Act*. Another amendment would force unions to give 72 hours' notice before going on strike, but employers could declare a lock-out with only 24 hours' notice. And a vote for a strike mandate would now expire after one year, forcing unions to vote again.

This bill does nothing more than strip away the right to fair collective bargaining. The Higgs government is tilting the playing field in the employer's favour when in fact there was no evidence during last year's strike by CUPE that workers were not providing essential services. This government is showing once again its contempt for public services and the people who deliver them.

During the November fiscal update, it was revealed that New Brunswick's budget surplus continues to swell and is now projected at \$774 million for the 2022-23 fiscal year. This result is mainly driven by cuts to public services, despite the risks they pose to the health and safety of New Brunswickers. Higgs has maintained an austerity agenda by holding off from investing in front line services to prioritize lowering taxes for high income earners. In fact, the recruitment and retention crisis in health care and long-term care is used as an excuse to push privatization as a solution – private for-profit hiring agencies staff public sector jobs at much higher costs.

In the municipal sector, CUPE 1773 had a very successful round of bargaining. Outside workers at the Town of Shediac signed a concession-free deal with a 3% annual wage increase, a raise of \$1.00/hour for all employees retroactive to July 1, 2002, other monetary gains, and most importantly, the elimination of casuals to create more permanent positions.

Prince Edward Island

CUPE PEI launched a letter campaign to tell Premier King that all front line workers should be included in the retention and recruitment program his government is putting in place. Hundreds of workers in healthcare were excluded from the \$8 million initiative providing financial incentives for the retention of some healthcare staff. While this initiative is praiseworthy, it unfairly excludes healthcare workers who play a crucial role in the system.

Close to 1,500 employees of Health PEI, members of CUPE locals 805, 1051, 1778, 1779, 2523, and 5331, were excluded from the program, along with over 1,300 members of IUOE Local 942. These members provide essential services such as laundry, dietary and cooking, sterilization, clerical, environmental/custodial, maintenance, trades, lab and X-ray tech, respiratory therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, administration, and much more. Many of these essential classifications excluded from the initiative are among the lowest paid in the system.

PEI's healthcare system also depends on the work done by all nursing home workers, most of whom were unfairly excluded from the retention initiative. The employees in long-term care also face all kinds of hardships, staff retention included, that can no longer be ignored.

The province's audited financial statements for the 2021-22 fiscal year show an \$84 million surplus. The government has the resources to adequately fund healthcare and provide better wages for workers who, as shown over the past 3 years, are truly healthcare heroes. Workers need to know the PEI government will do more to support them and this government must include the union in the standing committee on staff retention.

Recent legislative amendments tabled by the provincial government include welcomed changes to the Workers Compensation framework, including an increase in benefits payable to injured workers and to surviving spouses, dependents, and the adjustment of indexation.

Atlantic Region

Newfoundland and Labrador

After an 11-week strike, members of CUPE 2099 voted in favour of a new collective agreement with the City of Mount Pearl. CUPE 2099 represents more than 200 municipal workers in recreation services, administration, taxation and finance, road maintenance, water and sewage, facilities maintenance, landscape maintenance, engineering, planning, and more. Members faced a hostile employer and resisted concessions. The collective agreement is effective from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2026 and includes a modest wage increase and a signing bonus.

Members of CUPE 1289 voted in favour of ratifying a new four-year collective agreement on October 11, 2022. CUPE 1289 represents 380 inside municipal workers with the City of St. John's. The new deal includes a wage increase of 11% over four years, a signing bonus, improved sick leave provisions for part-time workers, enhancements to bereavement leave, and guaranteed overtime for scheduled events.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has been busy planning the centralization and privatization of public services, and our members in the province have been busy fighting those ill-informed plans. The latest restructuring in the works is a bill that would bring four health authorities into one new entity. The province did not take into account the impact on patient and employee privacy in the transfer, which raised concerns from the Privacy Commissioner. The Liberals also announced a new P3 project for a hospital in the St. John's area despite the disastrous experiences of Muskrat Falls and the Grand Falls Windsor Long Term Care Facility.

In the education sector, the abolishment of school boards has created a bit of chaos in the administration of collective agreements, with employers applying the wrong language to the wrong groups of employees, and in direct contradiction to each other. As a result, CUPE will have significant arbitrations to settle disputes regarding sick leave entitlements, vacation accrual, and wage-step progression.

Recruitment and retention is an ongoing concern in the health sector. CUPE NL has met with the government regarding temporary lump sum payments that do nothing to address the issue of low wages for skilled workers.

Nova Scotia

Sixteen months of organizing efforts paid off for this group of 388 workers, when CUPE was certified on November 1 to represent Paladin Security employees who work under contract for the Nova Scotia Health Authority, despite objections raised by the employer that were ultimately dismissed by the labour board. Workers voted nearly 90 per cent in favour of joining CUPE and will be part of CUPE 5479. I am happy to give them a warm welcome on behalf of 715,000 CUPE members across the country.

Municipal workers employed by the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) held a rally on November 8 to call on city council and management to offer better compensation, which would not only help address staffing shortages and turnover but would also save CBRM taxpayers money. Members of CUPE 933, who are currently in contract negotiations with the city, are frustrated by CBRM's failure to recruit and retain workers in high-pressure roles, such as jailers and communications operators, that are crucial for public safety. Our members are committed to providing quality public services to residents, but they're unable to do so with current staffing levels. The cycle of training new staff and losing them to better paying employers is unsafe and costly.

Also in November, frontline workers at Breton Ability Centre, members of CUPE 3513, held an information picket calling out the Department of Community Services for failing to address the increasing workplace violence that workers are facing. The department is moving people out of institutional living and into community-based settings – which is a good thing – but the changing nature of the work requires more staffing and greater resources to keep workers safe, neither of which is being addressed. The number and frequency of injuries to workers continues to rise and the department is not taking the matter seriously.

On the National Day of Action for Early Learning and Child Care, CUPE Nova Scotia joined the call for decent wages for early childhood educators (ECEs). Although Nova Scotia was one of the first provinces to sign a funding agreement with the federal government, it has not adjusted workers' wages appropriately since. The province recently released a wage grid with ECEs in centres not even being paid enough to get by. CUPE is asking the Houston government to come to the table and negotiate a wage scale that recognizes the value of the work and the qualifications of this predominantly female workforce.

Québec

At the end of October, Candace and I joined members of CUPE 2614 to walk the picket line in front of the Port in Quebec City. The employer, "Société des arrimeurs", locked out our members on September 15 because they refused to accept concessions to their work schedule arrangements, that would have had a major impact on work/life balance. The 81 members are determined to carry on this struggle, notwithstanding the employer's use of scabs. The latter, inexperienced and unqualified, have already been the source of two incidents that resulted in substantial material damages. Fortunately, no one was injured this time around, but the safety problems that arise from these unfair tactics have to be unambiguously denounced.

In the public sector, the Common Front unions tabled their bargaining proposals this fall and held a rally in Quebec City at the end of October, to express their solidarity and determination to the Treasury Board. This government is known for its contempt for the bargaining process: the Labour Administrative Tribunal recently rendered two decisions finding that the CAQ government had negotiated in bad faith with various health care groups over the past two years. Our members, represented notably by CPAS and CPSS, have no intention of putting up with these kinds of practices that harken back to another era and they're demanding working conditions that are commensurate with the services they provide.

Over the years, the working conditions of these 420,000 employees in these sectors have significantly deteriorated and their salaries have become grossly insufficient, such that major workforce shortages are jeopardizing public services.

CUPE 5425, representing technicians and professionals at CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, recently launched a campaign on employee distress and burnout. These deteriorating working conditions lead to burnout, depression, and anxiety disorders amongst our members resulting in increased absenteeism. This fuels the vicious circle of workload issues, and staff shortages, which negatively impacts public services.

Following consultation with our members, the union is prioritizing a real salary increase and permanent protections against inflation.

After a strike vote that was ratified last May, CUPE 4582, l'Autorité des marchés financiers (AMF) support staff and technicians signed a new collective agreement at the end of October. This agreement includes a new salary structure that, overall, will provide members with an average 18% increase. The union fought off concessions to their flexible schedules and won an additional floating holiday.

CUPE 2541, which represents 190 blue- and white-collar workers at the City of Alma, recently signed a new five-year collective agreement. The agreement stipulates annual salary increases of 2.09% as of October 2021 and a minimum 2.25% up to a maximum of 3.5% for the following years. Other gains include the creation of seven permanent positions, the recognition of general seniority with all the benefits linked to the collective agreement, including vacation leave, as well as the elimination of all articles that had created remuneration disparities. In addition, members won the extension of their summer schedule, a gradual increase in the child care premium for 2024, as well as six additional days of paid leave for union business.

Ontario

When Bill 124 became law in the Province of Ontario in 2019, CUPE Ontario was clear that this wage restraint legislation violated our Charter rights to free and fair collective bargaining.

On November 29, 2022, CUPE Ontario was proven right, as Justice Koehnen of the Ontario Superior Court issued his ruling that the legislation was unconstitutional, declaring the Act “void and of no effect”. Justice Koehnen found that Bill 124 infringes on the right to freedom of association under s. 2(d) of the Charter and is not saved by s. 1 of the Charter.

A key point in Justice Koehnen’s decision, was that the 1% wage cap contained in the legislation substantially interfered with collective bargaining by imposing a financial impact, preventing unions from trading off salary demands against non-monetary benefits, preventing the bargaining process from addressing staff shortages, interfering with the usefulness of the right to strike, and interfering with the independence of interest arbitration.

CUPE Ontario shares this significant victory with its union allies who were part of the legal challenge. Premier Ford and his government will appeal the decision and request a “stay” which could suspend the decision of Justice Koehnen. CUPE Ontario will continue to monitor this file.

This premier continues to use legislation to further his agenda. With Bill 39, *Better Municipal Governance Act* and Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act* the Ford government is creating chaos in municipal governance and funding. There are changes to governance rules which, in Toronto for example, will give even more authority to the mayor beyond the “strong mayor” framework. The proposal is that for provincial priorities, the mayor could pass bylaws with the approval of only one-third of council.

While the governance issues are a serious concern, the major impact on CUPE members will be through Bill 23. This bill has put a number of features in place to build homes on the greenbelt within the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. To advance housing growth, the government has stripped away the ability for municipalities to charge development fees. According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), this legislation could blow a \$5 billion hole in municipal budgets by 2031. This lack of funding could have broad consequences, forcing municipalities to look at alternative service delivery, privatization, and the selling off of more assets.

Adding insult to injury, the Ford government is pushing back hard against municipalities that are speaking out against the legislation and will now look at a second round of service audits (first done in 2019) to identify ‘waste’. This is Ford slang for identifying services to be contracted out, privatized, and sold, which could have severe impacts on CUPE members.

Manitoba

It was a pleasure to join more than 200 delegates at CUPE Manitoba's 58th division convention in Winnipeg in October. Delegates adopted amendments to their bylaws to advance the work of ensuring safe, welcoming and accessible union spaces, and adopted resolutions that commit to countering attacks from the provincial government aimed at cutting and privatizing public services, and freezing the wages of the workers who provide those services.

Heather Stefanson has been Premier of Manitoba since November 2021, and in that time has consistently ranked as the least popular provincial leader in the country – currently, only one-quarter of Manitobans approve of her performance and only four per cent “strongly approve”, contrasted with 43% who “strongly disapprove” of her leadership.

It will be important to track these numbers in the new year. A provincial election is required to be held in Manitoba on or before October 3, 2023, and the provincial NDP under the leadership of Wab Kinew has been leading provincial polls since before Stefanson became premier.

After difficult bargaining and in the midst of a municipal election campaign, CUPE 500 reached a tentative deal with the City of Winnipeg on October 11. The agreement, approved by the membership on October 25, raises the entry-level wage for workers at the city and includes \$1.4 million in market adjustments to address recruitment and retention issues in the workforce, in addition to a general wage increase.

Saskatchewan

In October, Premier Scott Moe released a white paper titled “Drawing the Line: Defending Saskatchewan's Economic Autonomy”, which accuses the federal government of overstepping their jurisdiction, pointing in part to environmental regulations that it claims infringes on provincial jurisdiction of natural resources. To address this, Moe's government introduced the *Saskatchewan First Act* in November, which is intended to “clarify and protect” against federal intrusion. Bill 88 has since passed second reading in the legislature.

The Education Workers' Steering Committee (EWSC) held an in-person All-Presidents' meeting in October. They heard presentations from Manitoba and British Columbia sector coordinators regarding their negotiating experiences and how they were able to engage members and coordinate their bargaining efforts. The EWSC also hosted a town hall meeting to build member engagement.

An online survey of our members in the library sector on workplace violence and harassment produced troubling results. Almost all of our members experience verbal abuse at work, with 39% of respondents reporting it is a regular occurrence and more than half noting an increase in this exposure in the last two years. Our library locals, with the support of staff, will discuss the findings and collaborate on an action plan to address the findings with their employers.

CUPE 1594 at Regina Public Library fought off concessions at the table and reached a new collective agreement with significant improvements including health benefits for all employees (which is significant in a sector with a high proportion of part-time and casual workers) and the restructuring of the wage grid to increase wages for our lowest-paid members by as much as 11% in addition to general wage increases.

Congratulations to CUPE 59 member and former shop steward Nathaniel Teed, who was elected as NDP MLA for the constituency of Saskatoon Meewasin in an October by-election.

Alberta

On October 6, United Conservative Party (UCP) members elected a new leader. Following a divisive leadership race, Danielle Smith was elected with 54% of the ballots cast and was sworn in as Alberta's new premier on October 11.

The early days of her premiership are proving to be as divisive as her leadership campaign, if not more so. In appointing her cabinet, she chose to eliminate the role of Minister of Labour, and failed to assign any minister responsibility for the status of women. In short order, she replaced the province's chief medical health officer and fired the eleven members of the Alberta Health Services' (AHS) board, claiming that AHS had "manufactured" the shortage of health-care workers in the province despite overwhelming evidence that the crisis in health care is due in large part to staff shortages.

Like Premier Moe in Saskatchewan, Premier Smith is picking a fight with federalism and the federal government, but her fight goes far further than Moe's. Smith's "sovereignty" legislation, which she claims will enable Alberta to "defend its provincial jurisdiction" against federal powers, was rushed through the legislature in just over a week. It will give the provincial government the power to ignore federal laws and policies it considers harmful to Albertans or the Alberta economy, and to direct other provincial entities such as school boards and provincially-funded service providers to do the same. The bill faced strong opposition from the labour community, Indigenous leaders, academics and some business leaders as well as the Alberta NDP, with leader Rachel Notley pledging to repeal the legislation if they form government in the spring.

The difficult bargaining climate in Alberta continues. Thirty-eight of our 41 agreements in the K-12 sector are currently open, and most of our members in the sector have not seen a wage increase in eight years. With employers offering nothing worth taking, members and leaders from the sector met in October for education and strategy sessions and vowed to coordinate their efforts for fair collective agreements.

British Columbia

Alberta is not the only province with a new premier. David Eby was sworn in as BC's 37th premier on November 18, shortly after being acclaimed as leader of the BC NDP. To show a commitment to reconciliation and strengthening relationships with Indigenous nations in the province, the ceremony was hosted by the Musqueam Indian Band at their community centre and included a blanketing ceremony.

A new provincial cabinet was sworn in on December 7, and I offer my congratulations to members of the CUPE family on their appointments. Former CUPE 1936 member and CUPE staffer Rachna Singh enters cabinet as Minister of Education and Child Care; former CUPE 4078 member Lisa Beare continues as Minister of Citizens' Services; former HEU Secretary-Business Manager Jennifer Whiteside becomes Minister of Mental Health and Addictions; and former CUPE 3787 member Dan Coulter is Minister of State for Infrastructure and Transit.

CUPE has been bargaining in almost every sector and region of the province through the fall. On September 23, CUPE's K-12 President's Council endorsed the provincial framework agreement reached by their bargaining committee the week before. Patterned on the agreement reached by the HEU for members working in the health facilities sector, the three-year agreement includes flat and percentage increases and cost-of-living adjustments. We also achieved \$3 million for provincial benefit improvements, substantial money towards local bargaining, and a 25% increase in the Learning Improvement Fund, which is used to support additional work hours for Education Assistants, the largest classification of CUPE members in the sector.

Following on this successful bargaining, agreements have been reached in other provincial sectors. CUPE 1767 reached an agreement with the BC Assessment Authority in early October. In the post-secondary sector, agreements were inked by CUPE 116 at the University of British Columbia and CUPE 4163-3 at the University of Victoria. Five college sector locals reached a provincial framework agreement with the "multi-employer table" which will now be incorporated into collective agreements as part of local negotiations between each local and institution.

The bargaining association negotiating on behalf of workers in the health sciences sector reached a tentative agreement in early November. In addition to securing wage increases in line with the provincial wage pattern, we achieved changes to the wage grid that lifts the lowest-paid jobs. Despite many weeks of bargaining through the fall, we have not been able to reach an agreement for our members in the Community

Health and Community Social Services bargaining associations. We are hopeful we will be able to make more progress when these tables reconvene in the new year.

Bargaining in the municipal and library sectors has been somewhat more difficult, with several locals seeking a strike mandate, serving strike notice, and engaging in political action and public campaigns in order to achieve collective agreements. This has been especially true in the Greater Victoria region where coordination between locals 50, 374, 1978, and 2011 proved key to securing agreements with their municipal employers that address the affordability challenges our members are facing.

Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)

HEU held its 33rd biennial convention in Vancouver this October, with more than 600 delegates in attendance. Congratulations to President Barb Nederpel and Financial Secretary Betty Valenzuela, both re-elected to their third term in office.

In a significant move towards diversity and inclusion of its members in the leadership of the union, delegates also elected HEU's first-ever diversity vice-presidents. The six positions, approved by delegates at their 2021 convention, ensure broad representation on the provincial executive board.

HEU is working with community allies to stop the deportation of one of their members, a housekeeper at Royal Columbian Hospital. Claudia Zamorano, who worked on the frontlines of infection control through the pandemic, is facing deportation on December 19, along with her family – even though their application to stay on the basis of humanitarian and compassionate grounds is still being processed.

This move flies in the face of the federal government's recent pledge to significantly increase immigration levels to address serious labour shortages being experienced across the country, including in the health care sector in BC.

BC's Minister of Health has also weighed in on the matter, noting Claudia's work keeping BC families safe through the pandemic and calling on the federal government to suspend the deportation.

Airlines

After eight long months, two members of CUPE 4059 unjustly trapped in the Dominican Republic have finally returned home to Canada. The two Pivot Airlines flight attendants were detained along with two pilots and a flight mechanic on April 5 after discovering and reporting suspected contraband on their plane. In doing so, they prevented a possible onboard fire and a potential air disaster resulting from the added weight and hazardous location of the contraband on the plane. Despite immediately following all local and international regulations, Dominican authorities held the crew without charge or questioning during the entire eight months.

Thousands of Canadians and CUPE members spoke out against the injustice faced by Christina and Alex, and together they helped keep up the pressure on the Dominican government. We never gave up fighting to bring Christina and Alex home, and while it's eight months too late, we're incredibly relieved they are home safe. I want to thank CUPE's Airline Division President Wesley Lesosky and Secretary-Treasurer Rena Kisfalvi for their relentless support through these extraordinarily difficult times for our two members. We know it's been a tough journey and that it doesn't end here – but neither does our support for them.

CUPE's Airline Division Component Presidents met in December to discuss how to end the widespread industry use of unpaid labour. Flight attendants regularly perform hours of unpaid work every time they report for duty – a practice that must stop.

For any other profession in Canada, when you show up for work and perform duties, you're on the clock and you're compensated for your time. But for the vast majority of flight attendants in Canada, that isn't the case. Although there are variations at each airline, generally speaking, flight attendants in Canada are at work, in uniform, performing work-related duties long before they start – and long after they stop – getting paid. It is estimated that between 20 and 50 per cent of a Canadian flight attendant's time at work is unpaid. Unpaid work may include things like prepping aircraft, boarding and deplaning passengers, gate duties, and safety-related tasks.

Flight attendants should be paid for every hour worked, and CUPE is going to ramp up its efforts to make sure they are. CUPE's ten different airline groups, representing over 18,500 flight attendants, are committed to raising public awareness, and mobilizing members to end this unfair and exploitive practice.

Organizing

For the reporting period of October 1 to November 30, 2022, CUPE welcomed 880 new members in 17 bargaining units, including 61 in social services, 191 in the municipal Sector, 68 in the education-preschool, 416 in health and 60 new members in other sectors.

There are currently 107 active campaigns underway that, if successful, would bring 38,551 new members to our union.

Our Atlantic region currently has 7 active campaigns in various sectors including health, social services, education, and municipal, that if successful would see 389 new members join our union.

In the Maritimes, there are currently 8 active campaigns which could bring 1055 workers into CUPE including 300 security guards from Paladin Security and 320 student employees at Mount Allison University.

Quebec welcomed 278 new CUPE members, creating 6 new bargaining units representing workers in the municipal and energy sectors. There are currently 14 active campaigns ongoing in the region that if successful would see 446 new members join our CUPE family.

The Ontario region currently has 29 active campaigns in various sectors that could see 9,975 new members join CUPE, including 3,500 at the University of Waterloo and over 3,500 members in healthcare.

Manitoba has 6 active campaigns, which could see an 2,332 new members join our union, including 2,100 workers at the Winnipeg School Division.

Saskatchewan also has 6 ongoing campaigns in various sectors, where CUPE hopes to bring 192 new workers into CUPE.

The Alberta region has been busy with 12 active organizing campaigns that could bring in 13,557 new members into CUPE. Four of the ongoing campaigns are in the social services sector where CUPE is looking at adding 12,100 members.

In British Columbia, CUPE continues to be busy with 24 active campaigns across various sectors including social services, recreation, culture and entertainment, and the municipal sector, with the potential of welcoming 10,605 new members.

In Memoriam/Personal

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

Members

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Karyle Wehowsky | CUPE 1285 – BC |
| Kenneth Burr | CUPE 998 – MB |
| Maria (Espie) Mallare | CUPE 8 – AB |
| Stephanie MacHart | CUPE 5555 – ON |
| Jacques (Jack) Samyn | Former CUPE MB Division President |
| Terry O'Connor | Former Secretary-Treasurer – CUPE Ontario |

Retired Staff

Selena Lashley

Executive Secretary
National Office

Nancy McNeil

National Representative
Windsor Area Office

In solidarity,

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

MARK HANCOCK
National President

:tp/ceu