

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT JUNE 2017 – SEPTEMBER 2017

Sisters, Brothers and Friends:

I hope you found some time to rest and recharge over the summer, and spend some much-needed time with family and friends. Our work as union and community activists never ends, of course, and it's important to take whatever time we can during these quieter months to steel ourselves for the work ahead.

I know you also took time to celebrate our movement over these months as well, at local union picnics, community days, Pride celebrations, and, of course, Labour Day. I had the opportunity to participate in some of these with you this summer, and at every stop I was so proud to see CUPE at the heart of the action.

It was an honour to celebrate with three of our locals who were marking their 100th anniversary this summer: Local 9 in Moose Jaw, SK; Local 30 in Edmonton, AB; and Local 37 in Calgary, AB. And it was a privilege to join Local 416, also celebrating 100 years in 2017, as they lead the Labour Day Parade in Toronto. As public sector unions face the many challenges before us today, it's so important to remember our long history of solidarity and the trials overcome by those who started our great union all those years ago.

There were fewer CUPE members on picket lines this summer than last, but I did join our Local 1816 members on their picket line in Burnaby, BC. I also had the opportunity to join activists in Corner Brook, NL in a rally against P3 healthcare, members of Local 51 at a community picnic in Moncton, NB, and to join our members in Toronto for Pride.

I had the privilege of witnessing the swearing in of Premier John Horgan and the new BC NDP cabinet in July – including former CUPE National President Judy Darcy as the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and CUPE member Lisa Beare as Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture. After 16 years of a BC Liberal government, it was heartening to be present at Government House in Victoria for this occasion.

MARK HANCOCK
National President/Président national

CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorier national

DENIS BOLDOC, FRED HAHN, JUDY HENLEY, DANIEL LÉGÈRE, MARLE ROBERTS
General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

Only a few short weeks into their mandate, the Horgan government has already made progress on reversing some of the worst policies and actions of the former government. I look forward to further progress for working families in BC, and the positive impact of a second NDP premier on our national political scene.

When racist violence broke out in Charlottesville, Virginia, in mid-August, Brother Fleury and I issued a statement condemning those actions, and expressing solidarity with those who stood up against the violence and hatred. We know that white supremacist activities, anti-immigrant sentiment, and xenophobia are on the rise in Canada, and that events south of the border embolden those who hold similar views in our country.

As CUPE members, and as Canadians, we must remember that there are more of us than there are of them. We must be vigilant in our efforts to celebrate diversity and inclusiveness; and we must not let ourselves become divided in our fight against white supremacy, racism, islamophobia, anti-Semitism and violence. I was so proud to see CUPE members and leaders stand against racism and bigotry at rallies across the country this summer.

NAFTA

Tri-lateral negotiations on amendments to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) got under way this August, following notice served by the US government in May.

The federal government has committed to consultations with all stakeholders throughout the process, and CUPE is participating in these meetings.

CUPE continues to work with its allies in Canada, the US, and Mexico to exercise influence over the parties and promote our position in favour of the elimination of problematic portions of NAFTA, improvements to labour and human rights protections, and environmental provisions.

NEB Policy on Collective Bargaining

I am pleased to report that all regions of the country have now submitted their action plans to Brother Charles and myself. The Regional Plans were arrived at after much consultation and collaboration between senior staff and elected leadership in each region. We are now in the implementation stage and I intend to report in more detail at the December and subsequent NEB meetings.

National Convention

Preparations continue for our 28th Biennial National Convention, being held in Toronto from October 2 – 6.

I look forward to spending the week with hundreds of dedicated CUPE activists as we consider our Strategic Directions for the next two years, adopt an organizing plan, and debate many of the 11 constitutional amendments and 338 resolutions submitted by our locals, councils, and divisions.

Collective Bargaining/Strikes/Lockouts

There is one dispute involving job action in this reporting period.

PROVINCE	LOCAL	EMPLOYER	# OF MEMBERS	STRIKE BEGAN	DURATION (days)
British Columbia	1816	Pacific Blue Cross	601	May 13, 2017	On-going

Local 1816 – Pacific Blue Cross – British Columbia

The 600 members had commenced job action in the form of work-to-rule, an overtime ban, and small group study sessions in an effort to move towards a settlement prior to taking full out strike action.

On June 30, the employer sent e-mails to all employees advising that they would no longer tolerate any withdrawal of services by members of Local 1816. The employer also advised that they were unilaterally changing the terms and conditions of employment including such draconian moves as eliminating sick leave and refusing to collect union dues.

The employer subsequently locked out the members of Local 1816 who refuse to be bullied. At the heart of the dispute is the employer’s concessionary proposals that target retiree benefits, extended health care (including drug coverage), paramedical coverage, and dental care.

The Board of Pacific Blue Cross has cancelled its annual membership meeting in an effort to avoid transparency. The employer has also engaged in using scab labour as determined by the British Columbia Labour Relations Board.

At time of writing, the lockout continues with no end in sight.

Local 2049 – Nipissing and Parry Sound Children’s Aid Society (CAS) – Ontario

As previously reported, these members returned to work after accepting binding interest arbitration rather than agree to regressive demands by an employer who disrespects their work. Arbitrator William Kaplan issued an award of two years with increases of 1.5% in each year and previously agreed upon matters. Arbitrator Kaplan refused to award the employer’s concessionary package including the attack on sick leave.

Regional Services Division Updates

ATLANTIC REGION

Newfoundland and Labrador

This summer, Newfoundland and Labrador had an unusual visitor, and it attracted much attention! A 15-foot tall wooden Trojan Horse travelled from St. John's to Corner Brook and to Stephenville Crossing. With the Trojan Horse, CUPE reminds Newfoundlanders of the hidden dangers of using public-private partnerships (P3s) to build health care facilities.

The Ball government plans to use P3 deals to build two health care facilities in Corner Brook – as if it’s a gift to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. But they’re not willing to make public all the details of their value-for-money assessment before the contracts are signed. We think that’s a huge red flag.

I had the chance to join our activists in Corner Brook, in August, for a rally with the horse. The event got tremendous media coverage – in fact, the Trojan Horse even got Premier Ball’s attention, and it is clear he is feeling the heat from our members’ mobilization for truly public health care services.

Nova Scotia

The McNeil government moved ahead with anti-worker legislation, without learning any lessons from other provinces in Canada, and proclaimed Bill 148, the Public Services Sustainability Act, capping wage increases and freezing the long-service award effective April 2015. This will affect almost 12,000 CUPE members.

In a rare move, the Government referred parts of Bill 148 to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal to determine the constitutionality of the legislation. However, the government only asked the court to review sections seven through 19. They failed to ask for a review of sections 20 and 21, which freeze the long-service award and strips it from future employees.

Although this move by the province does not officially end bargaining or arbitration, it eliminates the rights of union members to fairly negotiate their collective agreements, a constitutional right of all workers protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. CUPE will be joining with other unions in Nova Scotia to challenge the constitutionality of the bill in court.

On another front, the Halifax Typographical Union finally reached a settlement with their employer, the Chronical Herald. CUPE supported those workers during their strike, which lasted for more than 18 months. Last May, we heard the compelling testimony of one of their representatives at the Building Strong Locals Conference in Halifax.

MARITIMES REGION

New Brunswick

The New Brunswick division of CUPE was very active in “giving back to the community” this summer. Many community events were held across the province and I had the chance to participate in one of them, held in Moncton, with municipal workers of Local 51. It was a great opportunity to talk with members and to promote their work with residents of Moncton, where the City is moving forward with the privatization of some garbage collection routes. We also promoted the “Who Cares?” campaign about community care workers.

As well, CUPE New Brunswick supported students fighting against unpaid internships. The “My Internship is Ruining Me” campaign, led by the *Fédération des étudiantes et étudiants de l’Université de Moncton* (FÉÉCUM), denounces the fact that the Labour Standards Act does not apply to interns.

Our members in New Brunswick participated in Pride parades across the province and showed how strongly CUPE defends LGBTTTQI workers’ rights.

Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island’s child care services were the topic of an important piece in the Globe and Mail this summer.

Over the past two years, Prince Edward Island has launched a comprehensive child care strategy and moved kindergarten – until then publicly funded but delivered by private daycare centres – into the school system. The province moved child care from social services to the Education Ministry, set child development goals, and put educators in charge of designing the program.

Our child care activists across the country are looking to this example, as well as Quebec's experience, in their work towards a national, universal public or not-for-profit child care services framework.

Quebec

The labour dispute at Pacific Blue Cross has had an impact in the Province of Quebec: during an event in Montréal, attended by a number of organizations working in the group insurance sector, our members distributed leaflets to make the participants aware of the lockout involving Local 1816 in British Columbia. A wonderful example of solidarity from coast to coast!

Locals 301 and 429 have been actively involved in negotiations this summer: two new collective agreements were signed at the Montréal Municipal Housing Office. Also, Local 301 and the City of Montréal managed to reach an agreement on the blue-collar workers' pension plan, which was ratified by a vote of 97% at the end of August.

In addition, SCFP-Quebec representatives appeared before a parliamentary commission to denounce the Quebec Government's lack of transparency during a session devoted to examining the *Access to Information Act*.

Ontario

CUPE Education workers in Ontario reached an agreement with the provincial government on “remedy” after the Ontario Superior Court’s ruled the government’s Bill 115 (a bill that attempted to strip Ontario education workers of their rights to bargain collectively and banned strikes in the education sector) was unconstitutional. The negotiated remedy of \$56.7 million will be paid out to workers whose collective bargaining rights were breached during the period of 2012-2013. School board workers voted over 90% in favour of accepting the negotiated “remedy” agreement.

Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU) central bargaining started in June with additional bargaining dates in September. While our focus is on job security and language improvements to stop violence in the workplace, the employer is laying groundwork (through rights arbitration) to eliminate the union’s chain bumping, early retirement, and voluntary exit language. Bargaining updates, including the employer’s concession demands, were communicated to members at the Local Issues Bargaining Conference, on townhall calls, and through other communication vehicles.

We have received the decision from the courts in respect of CUPE’s suit against the Premier and two cabinet ministers for misfeasance in office in relation to the sale of Hydro One shares. The judge struck down our claim and dismissed the action and at the same time rejected many of the Crown’s arguments.

The Justice refused to accept the Crown’s argument “that an exercise of authority made in bad faith or for an improper purpose is not, in of itself, sufficient to establish misfeasance in public office”. The Judge refused to strike the claim on the basis that then impugned conduct by the Ministers was sheltered from judicial scrutiny on the basis of Parliamentary Privilege. CUPE will be appealing the decision.

Manitoba

Our health care members working in the Winnipeg Health Authority showed great solidarity and leadership in deciding to merge into one large Local Union. Local 204 will be a strong force for workers in the face of government funding cuts, health care restructuring, and likely representation votes. The Pallister government is undertaking the largest reform of health care in Manitoba in decades, including shutting down emergency departments, consolidating and privatizing some services and eliminating others. I congratulate our activists and leaders for joining together to protect public health care and our members who deliver it.

On July 4, the Partnership to Defend Public Services, of which CUPE Manitoba is a member, filed a court injunction against Bill 28, the “Public Services Sustainability Act”, a wage control bill that sets out public sector compensation rates for the next four years. The bill was passed in June, but it has not yet been proclaimed. The court action taken by this coalition of unions sends a clear message that we believe it to be unconstitutional and must be stopped.

In August, the Pallister government hired a private consulting firm, KPMG, to pursue the construction of four new schools under a public-private partnership (P3) model, despite growing concerns about the benefits and viability of P3 schools across the country. CUPE is working with labour and community allies to raise public awareness of this threat to public education.

Saskatchewan

In the face of public opposition and plummeting poll numbers, Premier Brad Wall announced his pending resignation in August. There is no doubt the premier’s flagging popularity is a direct result of a mean-spirited austerity budget introduced earlier this past spring. And Wall isn’t the only casualty. A prominent Saskatchewan Party MLA and former cabinet minister was forced to resign in a conflict of interest scandal, and others have seen the writing on the wall and chosen to retire.

As the Saskatchewan Party begins the search for a new leader, CUPE continues to work with our allies to push back against their regressive agenda and we are getting results. By the end of August, Premier Wall was publicly musing that Bill 40, his government’s legislation that would ease the privatization of crown corporations, was a miscalculation and should be reconsidered.

One of CUPE’s largest Local Unions held its founding meeting in September. CUPE health care workers across Saskatchewan voted over the summer to merge into one big union, in the face of government restructuring and looming representation votes. Members of Locals 3967, 4777, 4980, 5111 and 5999 are now proud members of Local 5430. I congratulate our members for this decision, which shows leadership, solidarity, and strength.

Alberta

CUPE Alberta has ramped up its campaign to convince the Notley government to change the Local Authority Pension Plan (LAPP) to a jointly sponsored plan – just like most large public sector pension plans across the country. CUPE is working with other affected unions to make LAPP amendments a priority for the government in the coming months. The LAPP covers most CUPE members in the province, including municipal and school board workers and employees of Alberta Health Services.

CUPE members joined with Friends of Medicare for a rally promoting a National Pharmacare strategy in Edmonton in July, during the annual gathering of the country's premiers. The Council of the Federation agenda included a discussion of the importance of improved pharmaceutical coverage in Canada.

British Columbia

As part of Pride Week Celebrations, CUPE BC released a video on appropriate gender pronoun use. The video, an initiative of CUPE BC's Pink Triangle Committee, features human rights lawyer, community activist and Local 1004 member, Adrienne Smith, explaining how easy it is to make sure you are using the proper pronoun. The video can be viewed at www.cupe.bc.ca. At CUPE BC's 2016 Convention, delegates unanimously passed a constitutional amendment to remove and change all gender pronouns like "he" and "she". For CUPE BC, it was a simple step but a significant one towards building an inclusive movement.

The Joint Job Evaluation Committee with BC Public School Boards Employer Association and CUPE continue to work towards finalizing the Job Evaluation Plan for the K-12 Sector. Unpaid work continues within the K-12 sector and the Support Staff Learning Improvement Fund (SSLIF) provided a much-needed improvement with respect to Educational Assistants. However, we continue with districts having very few bell-to-bell Educational Assistant positions. Our CUPE locals continue to plan jointly with School Districts on allocations for the SSLIF to assist with increasing hours for Educational Assistants which continues at \$20 million for the 2017-2018 school year.

The municipal sector continues to achieve relatively good settlements in bargaining. Wage increases provincially are at an average of close to 2% (1.91% a year over the next three years) a year with four and five-year terms. Issues on auxiliary or precarious work continue to be addressed. Benefit improvements are also being achieved. Most bargaining in 2017 will cover those locals on Vancouver Island, particularly in the Victoria area. Employers continue to utilize consultants who are pushing two-tier settlement terms and concessions.

Airlines

CUPE continues the fight against the 1:50 regulatory change that was ushered in by the federal government in 2015. The increase in the flight attendant to passenger ratio from 1:40 to 1:50 means that there are fewer cabin safety personnel on flights to respond to emergency situations.

In 2013, Sunwing received an exemption to operate under the revised 1:50 ratio. CUPE challenged that government decision in Court and, in August, the Federal Court of Appeal found that Transport Canada granted the exemption without conducting a comprehensive review of the airline's evacuation procedures to confirm that Sunwing could safely operate its flights with one less cabin crew member on board.

Also, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities (TRAN) unanimously recommended that the federal government review the 1:50 ratio. It's now time for the Trudeau government to act.

Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)

Premier John Horgan's appointment of Vancouver-Kingsway MLA Adrian Dix as the health minister and New Westminster MLA Judy Darcy to head up the new Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, is welcome news to leadership, staff, and members of HEU who look forward to working with the Ministers.

Burnaby-Deer Lake MLA Anne Kang was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors. HEU is looking forward to working with Kang to address the crisis in residential care, where nine out of 10 care homes aren't meeting government guidelines for staffing – and where repeated instances of contracting out are disrupting continuity of care for vulnerable residents.

A recently negotiated Memorandum of Agreement between HEU, the Facilities Bargaining Association, the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), and the Health Employers Association will ensure health care workers in clerical and clinical support at 10 correctional health services facilities across British Columbia will be represented by HEU.

As part of the agreement, current Chiron Health employees will have the first opportunity to apply for positions transferring to the PHSA. Any vacant positions following that process will be posted in accordance with the Facilities Subsector collective agreement.

Organizing Report

During the period of June 1, 2017 to August 31, 2017, CUPE leaders, activists, and staff have been very active organizing new members and protecting existing members.

Across the country, we organized 113 members in health care, 188 members in social services, 10 members in K-12 schools, 215 members in long-term care, 6 members in the library sector, and 206 members employed in municipalities. We welcome these 738 new members into the CUPE family.

We are currently involved in 15 active campaigns that, if successful, would bring 12,983 new members into CUPE. At Labour Boards across the country, we have 11 projects representing 440 new members waiting for certification votes to be conducted and protecting 708 existing members. We will not know the numbers until we get to the Labour Board, as there are three employers and numerous trade unions involved in one of the restructuring votes. There are two restructuring projects that will affect, at a minimum, over 14,000 CUPE members.

The National Executive Board was updated on two campaigns – WestJet and the RCMP. An application has been submitted under federal jurisdiction to represent certain civilian employees at the RCMP. Our campaign to organize flight attendants at WestJet is in full gear and the response to date has been very positive.

In Memoriam/Personal

Messages of Condolences

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

Members

- Cheryl Mason Retired Member of Local 1260 – British Columbia
- Tyson Titanich Member of Local 2515 – Alberta
- Mike Tracey Retired Member of Local 786 – Ontario
- Stephanie Baron Member of Local 7575 – Ontario
- Carmie Erikson Member of Local 5050 – Nova Scotia
- Susan Shiner Member of Local 3017 – Newfoundland
- Janet Bigelow Member of Local 1048 – British Columbia
- Penny Reed Retired Member of Local 1287 – Ontario

Retired Staff

- Stephen Edwards Servicing Representative – Manitoba Regional Office
- Antonette Roberts Secretary – British Columbia Regional Office
- Mildred Beckstead Stenographer – Trail Area Office – British Columbia

In Closing

By the time this report reaches members across our great country, we will likely have concluded our Biennial National Convention. Members will have elected their National Executive Board and given them a mandate for the next two years; a mandate that will see CUPE continue our proud tradition as a progressive union taking action on behalf of our members on issues important to Canadians.

In solidarity,

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

MARK HANCOCK
National President

:fb/ceu