

BE PREPARED

Making sure your members are aware – and organized – is the key to preventing contracting out, P3s and other forms of privatization.

Your local should have an anti-privatization or contracting out committee to raise members' awareness about the early warning signs, and to coordinate a response. Every member should be on the alert. Your local's staff representative is an important resource to build your networks, and will connect you with national research, communications, education and other staff.

Here are a few tips for putting early warning systems in place:

- **Develop a strong member or steward network** in the workplace that can stay on top of your employer's plans by talking regularly with supervisors, managers and local politicians.
- **Negotiate collective agreement language requiring disclosure** of all information about plans to contract out services your members provide – or could. Include contracting out as a standing agenda item for labour-management meetings. Get all financial and operations information from your employer.
- **Get volunteers to take turns attending all public meetings of the employer** (municipal council, agency, board, etc.). If no one can attend, get all meeting agendas, minutes and reports and read them carefully.
- **Watch statements managers and politicians make** in the media and at public events.
- **Identify contractors already operating at your workplace** and anticipate other work that they may go after. Track problems with quality and safety of contracted out work, building the case to bring it back in-house, and collecting evidence against further privatization.
- **Know your opposition.** Get information about companies that contract work in your sector, or the consultants who are promoting privatization. Subscribe to the same management magazines as your employer. Monitor local media and public debates for clues about who to watch.



TAKE ACTION

CUPE members have stopped many privatization schemes through early detection and quick action.

There are many ways to get ready, here are a few tips:

Strengthen your collective agreement. It's the first line of defence against privatization. Know and defend your current language. Work to get the best "no contracting out" language, broadest possible scope clause, and successor rights. Table language to bring contracted-out services or jobs back in house.

Develop local networks for face-to-face communication with every member. CUPE's 1 in 10 communicator's network is a good model. Having a network like a phone tree helps you reach members quickly, and lets members give feedback.

Share information. Let members know about privatization threats and victories. Newsletters, bulletin boards, email lists and a local website are all good tools. Watch the CUPE National site and your provincial division site for news you can share.

Build relationships with local elected officials and other community leaders. They are important allies – and will appreciate our support. Have informal, regular meetings with individual councillors and trustees. Keep track of how elected representatives vote on issues important to your workplace and local.

Connect in your community. Involve your local in community issues and campaigns. By showing we care and are involved in the community, we put a public face on our work. We also lay the groundwork for strong local coalitions, creating the allies we need to defend public services.

Promote public services. Share ideas for strengthening public services with employers and the public. We have the expertise, and know our work best. Find ways to highlight the value of public services in the community – and what the public stands to lose if services are privatized.

For up-to-date anti-privatization information, tools and resources, visit www.endprivatization.ca



Stop privatization before it starts
Know the early warning signs



CUPE members are the eyes and ears of an early warning system that detects and stops privatization before it starts. As front-line workers in communities across the country, we're well-placed to spot a privatization threat in our workplace or neighbourhood.

Privatization comes in many forms – two examples are contracting out and public private partnerships (P3s). No matter what the form, privatization hurts jobs, services, and communities.

Watch for the early warning signs of privatization, and be ready to take action. Together, we can stop privatization before it starts.

www.endprivatization.ca

CUPE / Canadian Union
of Public Employees

BE ALERT

Signs that your employer may be getting ready to privatize services include:

Service review

Employer service reviews are often linked to a search for “efficiencies.” Whether it’s cuts, restructuring, amalgamation, centralizing services, increased use of volunteers or other changes, these are opportunities for employers to privatize.

Unfilled positions

When workers who resign or retire aren’t replaced, it can be a sign of impending privatization.

Hard times

Beware of employers and politicians talking about budget cuts and “finding new efficiencies.” This can be an invitation for the privateers to make their pitch, promising false savings.

Concessions

Demands at the bargaining table for reduced wages, benefits or job security can signal plans to prime a service for privatization. Employers also threaten to contract out or privatize to extract concessions. But employers that get concessions almost always come back for more. Often, privatization goes ahead anyway.

Corporate mumbo-jumbo

Watch out for total quality management (TQM) or continuous improvement programs (CIP). These schemes squeeze unpaid “efficiencies” out of workers, and identify services for privatization. “Alternative service delivery,” “public private partnership,” and “strategic infrastructure partnership” all sound friendly, but they are code for privatization.

Pro-privatization conferences

These events are usually sponsored by the same corporations seeking contracts. There’s little or no balance – giving employer representatives the impression there’s no alternative to privatization.

Contractors in your workplace

The smallest contracting out activity can grow into a much larger problem if left unchecked. Make sure to monitor and enforce the scope of your collective agreement.

Corporate representatives in your workplace

If you spot corporate salespeople or consultants, find out who they were meeting with. Consulting firms like KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers make millions advising public sector employers to privatize, while at the same time working with corporations ready to profit from privatization.

