



2021 CUPE National
Convention

Reports of National Departments

- National Services
- Organizing and Regional Services

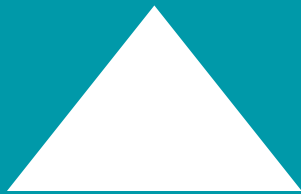
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National Services



NATIONAL SERVICES

Robert Lamoureux, National Managing Director

CUPE's Department of National Services is comprised of five branches: Communications; Human Rights; Legal; Research, Health and Safety and Job Evaluation; and Union Education. The Department also includes the Senior Economist, Senior Officer Policy and Planning, Senior Officer International Solidarity, and Senior Officer Political Action.

These five branches and four senior officers perform the core of the work within the department, but they do not do so in isolation. Most activities involve multiple branches and departments and involve members and staff as well as other unions, community coalitions, and non-governmental organizations. It is the primary task of National Services to provide overall oversight, direction and coordination of this work for CUPE.

The Department of National Services works to implement CUPE's social, economic and bargaining policies and conduct research and policy analysis in support of these goals. CUPE delegates to the 2019 national convention adopted many resolutions along with a major strategic directions policy paper, *Building Our Strength*, which forms the basis of our work since the last convention.

Each branch and staff within national services is mandated to meet these objectives, often working in conjunction with the Department of Organizing and Regional Services, the Department of Finance and Administration, the National President's Office and the National Secretary-Treasurer's Office, as well as our allies in the labour movement and the community.

In addition to the work mandated by convention, national services staff are responsible for supporting CUPE's National Committees and Working Groups; the National Sector Council conference – which was held virtually for the first time this year, due to COVID-19 pandemic health restrictions – as well as working collaboratively with other departments on the recent National Human Rights Conference, which was held virtually in March 2021. A special thank you to our administrative staff for their invaluable support to the department and our events, and for pivoting seamlessly to support us remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

National Defence Fund

National Services is responsible for the administration and oversight of the national strategic initiatives portion of the National Defence Fund. The budget is designed to fund several distinct areas of work within the union: a) sector meetings and issues; b) CUPE activity at meetings hosted

by employer organizations; c) innovative communications and research activity; d) initiatives and sponsorships to provide visibility for CUPE at cultural and political events, funding for our international program and support for strategic coordination of CUPE locals; e) support for legal interventions related to our policy work and lobbying and political action; f) support for community coalitions, and g) support for various other campaigns and initiatives.

Political Action

The focus of our work in political action includes support for municipal, provincial and federal elections, and campaign and coalition work to support our members and their work in communities across the country. While the pandemic has forced many of our on-the-ground campaigns and election-related work to move online, we have found ways to connect virtually and support members in new ways. The national federal election planning working group has been meeting to plan CUPE's federal election strategy, as the minority Liberal government could fall at any time on a non-confidence vote, or an election could be triggered by the government at a time of its choosing. Our election strategy will focus on building member and staff capacity to recognize the political opportunities that strengthen their bargaining power and give them the tools to act, as well as encouraging them to support their local NDP candidates.

Policy and Planning

A major focus of this work has been coordinating the planning and delivering of national events, such as the 2020 National Sector Conference and the 2021 National Human Rights Conference. Other work included coordinating work between staff in all branches, and other departments, to fulfill the decisions of the 2019 National Convention, including convention resolutions and strategic directions. The pandemic has created new challenges for national events, that needed to be adapted and delivered online for the first time. There is an opportunity to learn from this new way of meeting and look for opportunities to expand our reach and communication methods beyond the pandemic, while we all look forward to the days when we can meet in person again.

Economy

CUPE's Senior Economist works with all branches to provide economic analysis, commentary, information, and support for bargaining, popular economic education, and advocacy relevant to the work and priorities of the union.

This work mostly involves:

- Advocating for better public services particularly in the priority areas of CUPE members, for better wages and working conditions for public sector workers, and fairer taxes at federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government through submissions, presentations, analyses, and media work;
- Economic education and advocacy through presentations, and through the quarterly *Economy at Work* publication produced in collaboration with the Communications Branch;
- Responding to numerous requests for economic analysis of diverse issues within CUPE and among our allies;
- Preparing more in-depth analysis, reports and media commentary on specific priority issues of concern, including monitoring and analyzing the federal government's pandemic-related economic support programs, and advocating for their improvement.
- Supporting the National Secretary-Treasurer's Office and Department of Finance and Administration in the economic and statistical analysis required to plan CUPE's budget forecasts and the annual budget-making process.

Our economist also works closely with the Green Economy Network, the Broadbent Institute, and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, providing research analysis and contributing to the Alternative Federal Budget research, as well as the Trade Justice Network and other allies.

International Solidarity

Over the past two years, our International Solidarity Senior Officer has continued to ensure our worker-to-worker relationships with unions and social movements in other

countries remained a priority, despite the challenges of a global pandemic.

COVID-19 has exposed the stark inequality between the rich and the poor and among marginalized communities. The injustice of this inequality within countries, and between countries of the Global South and the North, is unsustainable and unacceptable and has inspired solidarity and resistance around the world. CUPE belongs to the international movement challenging the systemic inequities that have denied so many of our sisters, brothers and comrades access to human and labour rights, including basic health care and access to vaccines during the pandemic.

We have continued to work collaboratively and closely with several organizations who request funding to ensure their core work continues, and continue to engage in important work with several international formations and coalitions including:

- Common Frontiers, a coalition of labour and other civil society organizations focusing on solidarity and international trade and investment in the Americas;
- International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG), who work to protect the right to dissent and freedom of expression in Canada and around the world, particularly in the context of emerging anti-terror legislation;
- Americas Policy Group (APG), a coalition of trade unions and NGOs working together to challenge Canadian foreign policy and work in solidarity with social movements in South and Central America.

Coordinating actions and pooling our resources with other unions is an important way to maximize the impact of our international solidarity. Our active affiliation with Public Services International (PSI) includes integrating and supporting PSI priorities and actions including defending the public sector and opposing the threats posed by international financial institutions, international trade and investment agreements, privatization and austerity, organizing workers to challenge these threats and working toward realizing full trade union rights for all workers around the world.

COMMUNICATIONS

Karine Fortin, National Director

Nationally and regionally, CUPE's Communications Branch provides a range of services for members, locals, and divisions.

These range from assistance with materials; campaigns to protect public services or elevate our union's image in the community; support for bargaining; help in dealing with the media; planning and implementing cost-shared campaigns between CUPE National and locals; mobilizing members; and providing strategic advice to locals and members.

Most of the work is on regional assignments supporting local, regional and division priorities in the field. Ottawa-based staff focus on national issues and campaigns; work with the National Officers; support national conferences; provide support to other departments and branches like Organizing, Research and Human Rights; maintain our website, cupe.ca; manage our social media and prepare and design CUPE publications.

Online Communications: cupe.ca and Social Media

CUPE's website is a source of news about CUPE, our members and our priorities. It includes practical information and tools for members and a hub for campaign activities. In the last year, it has been even more important to help keep our members and public informed and engaged while our entire lives have had to move online.

Social media are our main tools for sharing stories with our members and the public, and for members to easily share information with their friends, families, and communities. We are active on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

We continue to provide support to hundreds of locals, divisions, and councils in setting up and maintaining websites, mailing lists, and social media accounts.

Media Relations

We support the National Officers in their roles as spokespersons for CUPE in the media and at public events. We also promote CUPE and other unions as a strong counter-balance voice against right-wing populism, and against politicians who attack the principles and values of the labour movement and its members. Each year, we issue hundreds of news releases, opinion articles and letters to the editor, both nationally and in every region of the country.

Publications

At the end of 2019, CUPE restructured its publications and decided to focus on two quarterlies to address key issues for members and the union. *Counterpoint* gives an overview of CUPE activism across the country, while *Economy at Work* is a tool to navigate the big picture of the economy.

The pandemic forced us to suspend the production of paper copies of our publications in March 2020. We have not abandoned the idea of printing and distributing our publications through our general mailing, but for 2020 and 2021, we have invested in creating content for electronic, more shareable formats.

In addition to these publications, we produce a daily newsletter called *CUPE Today*, which shares stories and victories of members from coast to coast.

We aim at constantly improving our publications and online content to make it more relevant, engaging, and timely. We encourage members to subscribe to the online version of our products at cupe.ca/list-subscribe.

National and regional communications staff also provide support for division publications.

Anti-Privatization

CUPE's national anti-privatization communications work exposes and opposes privatization and promotes the benefits of publicly-delivered services and publicly-owned infrastructure. In addition to celebrating local contracting-in wins, we continue to highlight the dangers of public-private partnerships and new forms of privatization, like social impact bonds and blended finance. We support the production of a wide range of materials and tools that help our members learn, mobilize, and take action to defend public services.

CUPE launched a pension and privatization toolkit to provide information to activists and pension representatives about the dangers of pension funds investing in public-private partnerships (P3s) and other types of privatization. The *Keep our pensions out of privatization* kit is available on cupe.ca.

Training and Resources

CUPE communications staff regularly delivers training to members on topics such as how to handle the media and how to build successful campaigns. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have significantly updated our tools and tactics to expand our reach and effectiveness online. Staff is now better equipped to support locals and members who wanted to step up their digital organization and mobilization skills.

The branch also supports the development of a range of resources for members, including fact sheets and guidelines on a range of issues from health and safety to human rights, brochures, sector profiles, promotional material, and resources for local communicators, including newsletter and Website templates.

Strategic Directions/Resolutions

We support the priorities and undertakings approved in CUPE's 2019-2021 Strategic Directions and resolutions passed at the 2019 convention. This includes support for:

- Expanding our members' power, by prioritizing member engagement and supporting our local unions in their efforts to improve their digital game.
- Increasing our bargaining strength by supporting locals in the implementation of their strategies and campaign plans.
- Fighting for safe workplaces by demanding adequate PPE for workers and by combatting violence in the workplace
- Building our campaign power by training locals and leaders on how to communicate effectively.
- Consistently opposing restrictions on the right to free collective bargaining in the public sector in our communications.
- Working with our allies on political action to bring about positive change on issues that matter to our members.

Conferences, Conventions and Special Events

Communications Branch staff worked hard on a range of conferences, conventions, and special events, which all happened online because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These include the Federation of Canadian Municipalities annual meeting and the federal NDP Convention.

Providing support for CUPE's National Sector Council Conference and the Human Rights Conference was a key focus of our work. These national events had robust communications support from event planning through to material production, design, and online staging. Communications staff in the regions and from the national office supported all CUPE Division Conventions. The Communications Branch also plays a key role in preparing for the National Convention – overseeing all design work, videos, promotion, and coverage.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Elizabeth Dandy, National Director

The past two years have seen significant challenges as well as achievements for human rights. The COVID-19 crisis has had a significantly disproportionate impact on equity-seeking workers. As COVID-19 swept across the globe, mostly women, many racialized, have been on the frontlines of the response providing public services like health care, social services and child care. For too long, many of these jobs have been undervalued, precarious or unsafe. Recognition has emerged here and around the world that this work is crucial, and that working conditions and wages must improve.

As the pandemic unfolded, it became clear that people from equity-seeking groups are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 because of long-standing structural and societal inequality, including lack of access to safe services, decent jobs and living wages. In Indigenous communities, the lack of infrastructure, including water infrastructure, has been particularly alarming, given orders to wash hands frequently. A spotlight was shed on the need for cultural safety in public services for Indigenous people. Joyce Echaquan died in a hospital bed not long after releasing a Facebook Live video that showed her experiencing significant physical distress as health care workers verbally abused her.

Anti-Asian racism has increased across Canada and globally with frequent reports of violence, harassment and hate crimes. CUPE honoured Asian Heritage Month and participated in the virtual National Day of Action against Anti-Asian Hate in May 2021.

CUPE released a statement in solidarity with the movement for Black Lives Matter, condemning the Minneapolis police violence which resulted in the death of George Floyd and many other Black people in Canada and the United States. Since then, ongoing public outrage, as well as widespread organizational anti-racism training and other measures have helped to raise awareness and education on the need for change. There is still much work to be done to dismantle systemic racism in Canada and across the globe.

Exclusion and violence against marginalized communities are ongoing injustices that are amplified in crises like pandemics. Disability rights have been pushed to the back burner during the COVID-19 crisis. Government measures to respond failed to address the needs of persons with disabilities, leading to calls by disability rights organizations for a disability lens on the pandemic response and post-pandemic recovery measures. At the same time, a spotlight was shone on the need for safe community spaces for

LGBTQ2+ people when community centres were closed due to “shut down” orders. LGBTQ2+ workers continue to experience homophobia and transphobia in their jobs, public spaces and sometimes personal spaces.

Equity, Human Rights and COVID-19

CUPE supported widespread calls for a human rights-based approach to the pandemic and post-pandemic government responses, working with our allies across social movements such as the women’s movement and the disability rights movement. We supported calls for the need for governments to gather disaggregated race-based data, in addition to other socio-demographic data, in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.

CUPE held its first-ever virtual National Human Rights Conference in March 2021. Over 700 members registered for the conference, called *Human Rights in the Time of COVID: Organizing for Change*. Through plenaries, discussion groups, workshops and caucuses, conference delegates explored human rights concerns in the context of COVID-19 and strategized on how to create a more just post-pandemic world. Conference topics included how to build stronger, more equity-focused locals and how to bargain for equity in the workplace.

Anti-Racism

A significant part of the Branch’s work for the 2019-2021 period included the development of an *Anti-Racism Strategy for CUPE*. This work followed the adoption of a resolution at the 2019 National Convention. Consultations were held across Canada with Black, Indigenous and racialized members to develop the Strategy and a draft Strategy document was presented at the National Human Rights Conference for members’ feedback. The Strategy includes 10 overarching goals and a six-year timeline for implementation, with ongoing reporting and accountability.

CUPE promoted and participated in Black History Month events, producing new posters and bookmarks, honouring Black leaders in Canada. We also promoted the Green Square Campaign for January 29th and supported allies’ calls to the federal government to designate the day as a National Day of Remembrance against hate and intolerance.

The Human Rights Branch also responded to numerous requests from staff, locals and CUPE divisions for advice on how to combat racism in workplaces and unions, as well as requests for anti-racism training and resources.

Disability Justice

The federal government began work on developing regulations under the new *Accessible Canada Act*, after delays due to COVID. CUPE joined with other unions and the CLC to develop recommendations on the regulations. The arms-length Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization (Accessible Standards Canada) was also formed and has begun to develop voluntary standards, including employment standards.

CUPE took part in the virtual National Disability and Work Conference in December 2020. The conference focused on discrimination and gaps in employment for persons with disabilities. It provided persons with disabilities, unions, employers and governments with strategies and tools to increase the labour market participation of persons with disabilities.

Given the virtual environment for meetings and conferences throughout the pandemic, the Human Rights Branch developed guidelines on ensuring accessible virtual meetings under the advice of the National Persons with Disabilities Committee. The guidelines were published on cupe.ca during National AccessAbility Week in June 2021.

Indigenous Rights

CUPE's commitment to truth and reconciliation has been an important focus of the Branch's work. We made presentations to members on how privatization impacts Indigenous communities and the need to challenge anti-Indigenous racism in public services. We also developed resources highlighting water issues for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. CUPE launched a Water is Life campaign to engage members on Indigenous water issues.

Part of our reconciliation work includes direct support to Indigenous organizations. CUPE supported the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society in their Have a Heart Day event on February 14th, promoting equality for Indigenous children. We also supported the National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network in their important work to raise awareness about 60s Scoop survivors. We released a statement in June 2020 acknowledging the one-year anniversary of the release of the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We joined with Indigenous communities and organizations across Canada, demanding the action plan that was promised by the federal government on the report's one-year anniversary.

LGBTQ2+ Rights

In partnership with Carleton University and Egale Canada, CUPE released a report on creating safer public services for LGBTQ2+ workers and seniors: *"It's Got to Be About Safety": Public Services that Work for LGBTQ2+ Older*

Adults and LGBTQ2+ Workers in Canada. The report is based on an eight-month research project, involving interviews and focus groups with LGBTQ2+ public service workers and seniors across Canada, including CUPE members. One of the key findings in the report is that working conditions for LGBTQ2+ workers are related to service conditions for LGBTQ2+ clients, and vice versa. The report identifies several promising practices to help workers and clients, including employment equity, cultural competency standards tied to funding and increasing LGBTQ2+ representation on governance boards.

The union also organized two virtual panel events with CUPE members, academics and LGBTQ2+ community activists to release the report and discuss its findings and recommendations. CUPE sent a delegation to the Fierté Canada Pride National Conference in Regina in February 2020 where we delivered a workshop on the LGBTQ2+ seniors research project.

With the cancellation of in-person Pride parades and events across Canada, CUPE developed virtual resources and swag focused on 'Frontline Pride' for members to download. We also worked with Dignity Network and Fierté Canada Pride to support virtual human rights panels for local Pride events. The panelists included LGBTQ2+ activists from around the world discussing the human rights of LGBTQ2+ people globally, including LGBTQ2+ refugees.

Women's Equality

Challenging gender-based violence and harassment continued to be a crucial focus for CUPE. The Human Rights Branch helped to advise on a federal sector project about domestic violence at work. Tools, training and other resources were developed for unions and employers. The website to access the resources was launched in January 2021 to coincide with the new Canada Labour Code provisions on workplace violence and harassment.

The Branch was also involved in a federal government initiative on gender-based violence in the post-secondary sector, participating in an advisory "community of practice" on complaints and investigations processes. Staff also supported the NEB's Safe Union Spaces Working Group, particularly on the issue of gender-based harassment. We assisted the Research Branch in reviewing new resources on addressing sexual violence on university campuses, and advised on and promoted a cross-Canada survey on workplace violence and harassment, including sexual harassment. The survey was launched in partnership with the Canadian Labour Congress, the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children at Western University and the University of Toronto.

CUPE celebrated our members' decades-long activism when the federal government announced a National Child Care Program in the 2021 federal budget. More work needs to be done to ensure child care workers are front and centre in discussions on how this program is developed with provinces and territories and to hold the federal government to its promise.

LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE

Gavin Leeb, National Director

The Legal Branch consists of a director, 24 legal representatives employed across the country, an articling student and three WSIB paralegals in Ontario – all of whom are supported by hardworking administrative staff in each of their offices. We work as advocates in every region and at the National Office, appearing in court, arbitration hearings, labour and workers' compensation boards, and other tribunals on behalf of CUPE, its locals and members. We support the National Officers, locals, staff and members on a day-to-day basis, providing strategic legal advice and legislative analysis. We also provide education and training to members and staff.

In any given year, the legal representatives and paralegals deal with hundreds of issues. Together, we monitor legal developments impacting CUPE, and the labour movement as a whole, in order to both advance and protect the interests and rights of the union and its members. Needless to say, a very significant portion of our time and energy since March 2020, has been devoted to dealing with the fallout from the pandemic. From advising on emergency powers legislation to providing instruction on conducting arbitration hearings on Zoom, the Legal Branch has been working flat out to both counter the impact of the pandemic on members' rights and ensure that CUPE continued to be able to provide effective leadership and representation. At the same time, the Branch has successfully maintained its focus on protecting and advancing various non-COVID related matters to achieve real gains while defending against attacks by employers, governments and/or others. Arranging for expert legal pension advice for plan members across the country has also remained constant throughout the pandemic. Lastly, the Branch provided considerable support and assistance with the rollout and implementation of the updated trial procedure at Appendix F to the National Constitution. In short, it's been a busy time.

COVID related

As will be recalled when the pandemic first struck the in mid-March 2020, the entire country largely shut down almost overnight with non-essential businesses closed, travel restricted if not banned, border restrictions imposed in certain provinces and school were closed. To say that the world as we knew it – along with our work lives – changed dramatically within a few days would be an understatement to most. For the staff of CUPE's Legal Branch it was also a time of significant legal uncertainty as governments at all levels reached into their statutory toolkits to provide themselves with the authority required

to enact a variety of emergency powers. In almost all instances CUPE members were directly affected by the decisions made by governments either as a result of changes to service delivery and/or restrictions imposed on the citizenry. At times it appeared as if workers' rights including collective agreements were almost an afterthought to the decision-makers. That is precisely where, of course, CUPE pushed back. Hard.

Defending members' rights particularly during the first months of the pandemic required very quickly developing an in-depth understanding of a new legal landscape that granted governments and employers extraordinary powers laid on top of existing statutory and contractual rights and obligations. The Branch rose to the challenge in each and every region and within a very short period time assimilated the new legal regimes and provided strategic advice to members, staff and the elected leadership across all sectors. The experience reported by the BC legal staff reflects what occurred across the country: Countless hours were spent "strategizing, drafting and reviewing Letters of Understanding (LOUs), assessing collective agreement language, and advising on issues related to reductions in work, layoff, redeployment, continuation of benefits, extension of recall, and bumping rights, among other areas. With our assistance, CUPE locals have successfully reduced the number of layoffs and protected the seniority rights of our members, while minimizing the immediate impacts of loss of employment or continuity of wages and benefits." Additional issues that kept us occupied included the sufficiency, or more frequently lack of, adequate PPE, the mass lay-offs in the airline sector, the redeployment of cleaning staff from closed schools to hospitals in Ontario and accessing workers' compensation for workplace exposure to COVID.

From the outset of the pandemic, weekly Branch meetings were held on Teams to share and exchange ideas and information so that we could all benefit from the work of others ensuring the most effective use of our resources and skills. The sharing of information was particularly helpful when, for example, developing initial expertise in relation to such matters as the federal wage subsidy and income replacement programs and the interaction with entitlement to Employment Insurance. Similarly, as it became evident that virtual arbitration, court and labour board hearings would be with us for some time the Branch embarked on a joint process of learning and developing competence in effective advocacy when representing CUPE and/or members in virtual proceedings. Finally, and more recently, the existence of overarching legal

principles in connection with vaccination obligations/requirements including *Charter* considerations made this another topic well suited for shared Branch wide learning to the benefit of CUPE members, leadership and staff.

Non-COVID related

While the pandemic resulted in drastic changes in many respects which raised numerous novel and unprecedented legal issues and challenges, the Legal Branch continued with our regular work of advising and advocating in connection with non-COVID related employment, labour relations, human rights and other matters. For example, the following *Charter* challenges continue in the Courts:

1. Alberta: Bill 32. This legislation passed in 2020 makes sweeping changes to labour and employment legislation in Alberta. Notably, it introduces a two-tiered opt-in dues structure that requires employees to opt-in before unions can collect or use dues for political activities. CUPE, together with the Alberta Federation of Labour, formed a coalition of unions to commence a *Charter* challenge to this blatantly anti-union undemocratic legislation.
2. Ontario: Bill 124. In 2019 the Ontario government passed legislation that is similar to Bill 28 in Manitoba in that it restricts compensation increases to a maximum of 1% for three consecutive years. CUPE is leading a coalition comprised of over 20 other unions that have commenced a *Charter* challenge of the legislation.
3. Manitoba: Bill 28. In 2017 the Manitoba government passed legislation restricting compensation increases in each of the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 to 0%, 0%, 0.75% and 1% respectively. Our court challenge was successful with the court declaring that Bill 28 substantially interfered with collective bargaining and the government was seeking to reduce the deficit "on the backs of workers." The government's appeal of the decision is scheduled to be heard on June 2, 2021.
4. Quebec: Bill 15. The *Act* adopted measures to address municipal pension plan deficits including i) making active plan members responsible for an equal share of deficit costs post December 31, 2013, and ii) unilateral cessation of indexing by

municipalities. The Court ruled that suspending the indexation of the pension of retired members violated the *Charter*. However, the provisions related to active members were upheld. CUPE is appealing to the Court of Appeal.

5. New Brunswick: Shared risk pension plan. We are challenging legislation passed by the NB government in 2013 that changed the pension plans for CUPE members (and others) from a defined benefit plan to a target or shared risk model. The government has dragged its heels throughout the pre-trial evidence gathering phase such that it is uncertain whether the case will be heard in 2021.
6. Nova Scotia: Bill 148 challenge. The Nova Scotia government passed legislation that imposed upper limits on negotiated wage increases of zero for two years followed by maximum increases of 1% in the third year and 1.5% in the fourth year. The same legislation unilaterally eliminated the accumulation of severance entitlements effective April 1, 2015. The Nova Scotia government has been similarly relentless in its opposition to the case proceeding and despite our best efforts the case is not likely to be heard in 2021.

In addition to participating in these very important broad court challenges, CUPE and the Legal Branch have continued to advocate on behalf of members and locals in arbitrations and before labour boards and human rights tribunals. Recent examples include: i) defending against an attempt by the Carpenters' Union in New Brunswick to raid our almost 2,000 LPNs, ii) obtaining repeated wins certifying CUPE to represent university workers, casuals in the Atlantic region, transit supervisors, and hospital clerical workers, iii) protecting grievors from abuse during a hearing through a no-contact order against a mayor accused of harassment, iv) seeking to overturn a ban on secondary picketing, and iv) ensuring the protection of the seniority rights of CUPE bargaining unit members when persons from another union in the same workplace are accommodated in their bargaining unit. The list goes on.

As the foregoing demonstrates, the Legal Branch has continued to fight and win cases achieving important gains for members and CUPE throughout the pandemic. And we will continue doing so post-pandemic and beyond. CUPE Legal at your service.

RESEARCH, JOB EVALUATION AND HEALTH & SAFETY

Archana Rampure, National Director

We are the largest branch under the National Services Department. Within our branch we have: an Administrative Officer, a Systems Analyst as well as 30 research, job evaluation and health and safety officers and Collective Agreement Information System (CAIS) coders and their administrative support staff in Ottawa, and 33 specialists across the country. Branch staff support CUPE members, activists, and elected leaders from locals, divisions, the National Executive Board and the National Officers.

On any given day, staff provide: bargaining support through surveys and research analysis, present arbitrations, assist with health and safety in the workplace, providing strategic organizing assistance, help with planning campaigns, conferences and other CUPE events, negotiate pay equity and internal equity for locals, support CUPE National, regional and sector committees and provide specialized education and training to members and staff on such topics.

We have supported hundreds of locals through major bargaining in these past two years. Staff have created and administered well over 400 surveys, mostly about bargaining priorities but also about topics ranging from just transition to members' mental health and safety. We have analyzed bargaining trends and tried to anticipate the attacks on members before they become reality. We have worked to provide members, locals and divisions the information they need to elect progressive and worker friendly representatives at all levels of governments.

Much of our work is set by National Convention, as we follow up on the research and analysis necessary to implement the resolutions passed by members and the priorities identified by Strategic Directions. We have written submission and briefing notes on public transit, drug policy, vaccination, staffless libraries and pension protections, to list just a few. We have presented on the benefits of remunicipalization at an international conference, and the proceedings have been published.

After decades of championing quality, accessible and universal child care, we have seen the Trudeau government commit to federal funding for child care; of course, we are now engaged in working with regions and divisions to ensure that this funding is put to the best possible use by provinces who will actually be charge of implementation. We have supported the launch of the *Education for All* campaign to ensure access to post-secondary education; and we have prepared a toolkit on sexual violence and harassment on campus.

Health care has always been a critical issue for us, even before the pandemic but the state of privatized long-term care became national news in 2020, once the Canadian military was sent in to help with the dire situations faced by residents in some homes in Ontario and Quebec, and that triggered a national public long-term care campaign – fixlongtermcare.ca. We continue to press for a national pharmacare plan and oppose the Cambie clinic in Vancouver. Branch staff have been integral to province-wide health care and school board bargaining from British Columbia to New Brunswick. We have made written and oral (and virtual) presentations on health care restructuring and privatization from New Brunswick to Ontario and Quebec to Alberta.

We have been active on federally mandated issues from presenting to various consultations conducted by federal ministers ranging from child care and pharmacare to the future of the airline industry to the Canada Infrastructure Bank to EI entitlements during COVID to climate change and Just Transition funding, and for fairness for our domestic communications sector and a "Netflix tax". We have been relentless in pursuing our members' concerns around job loss and retraining and issues around poverty, precarious work, and affordability to provincial legislators as well, participating in prebudget consultations across the country. We have also represented CUPE members on particular issues such as the privatization of Manitoba Hydro, housing affordability in the east coast, the gender pay gap in Ontario, and the need to support women workers who are caught up in the vortex of having to balance unpaid care work with their own paid work.

This work is rooted in the policies adopted at 2019 National Convention but of course, the advent of COVID in March 2020 altered the rhythm and pace of our work. We pivoted to provide supports to members dealing with the impacts of COVID from the very onset of the pandemic.

Indeed, health and safety staff followed the progress of COVID and its potential impact on members from the very beginning. Our work to support members and locals had begun well before the World Health Organization designated COVID as a pandemic. Since then, health and safety staff have spent almost all of their hours trying to ensure the best possible protection for members during this unprecedented time. So many of our members are frontline workers who do not have the option of working remotely and we have made every effort to identify and arm members with the knowledge they need to pressure employers to provide safe work. Staff in the Branch have worked closely with locals to ensure that employers were

not able to use the pandemic to trample on the hard-won rights and privileges of CUPE members.

At the same time, we have also worked on protecting and advancing various other bargaining issues to achieve real gains, such as around mental health, knowing that the long-term impact of COVID will be immense. The resources we have been to provide around health and safety are world-class; we have received requests to access them from unions as far away as Brazil and Sweden! In 2021, staff have also been working with locals and members to facilitate voluntary vaccination.

Job evaluation and pay equity issues have been in the spotlight more than ever due to the impact of COVID. Working women are most affected. Our job evaluation specialists have supported members in negotiating internal equity and where mandated by legislation, gender-based pay equity, quietly making gains for workers at a time in which we have seen the strangulation of negotiated wage gains. Staff have also been anticipating the implementation of the *Federal Pay Equity Act*, which received Royal Assent in late 2018. CUPE has fought for the proactive active model of pay equity for workers for decades; this particular legislation only impacts members in the federal sector but it has the potential to set a precedent for those provinces that do not currently have a pay equity regime. In British Columbia, we are working on a provincial job evaluation plan for K-12 workers.

Researchers in every region and in the National Office have supported locals and servicing representative negotiate MOUs and LOUs about layoffs and furloughs, about the continuation of benefits and pensions, about large scale redeployment (sometimes between sectors and between employers), and on remote work arrangements and employer responsibilities to all those workers who were so abruptly sent home from worksites in March 2020.

In addition, research staff produced materials that will be of use for locals and staff across the country. We have developed a first collective agreement template and guide; we have extensively revised our Guide to P3s; we have completed a project on Bargaining Against Precarity which provides samples of best protections negotiated by CUPE locals. We now have an updated toolkit and guide to fighting off core-service reviews that we know will be of value during the tough rounds of bargaining we anticipate will occur as Canada recovers economically from the pandemic.

All of this work has been supported by our administrative officer and systems analyst, and our CAIS and administrative support staff who are the keepers of the many processes and the reams of data that support the work of researchers, job evaluation specialists, and health and safety representatives.

In March 2020, our staff were travelling still for work and had to find their way home and restructure their own lives to deal with remote work, school closures, and care responsibilities. But from the outset of the pandemic, branch staff, both in the National Office and in the regions met virtually to share and exchange ideas and information so that we could all support each other and benefit by sharing our (sometimes newly-acquired!) resources and skills. The sharing of information was particularly helpful when, for example, trying to evaluate the responses from employers across regions, provide consistent advice regarding furloughs, negotiate redeployment to hard-hit health care worksites, and so on, but also made it possible to do our best work for members. As with CUPE members, the staff have spent the last two years coping steadily with COVID and its impacts. Despite our own experiences of COVID, we are all so proud to serve CUPE members who themselves have worked so hard to provide public services in Canada during these most challenging two years.

UNION EDUCATION

Sylvia Sioufi, National Director

Re-imagining our union education program

Pre-pandemic, the Union Education Branch had intended to introduce some online modules to complement existing workshops. Our plan was to pilot the first modules in the fall of 2020 and slowly prepare our locals and members for a blended approach to union education. The pandemic changed everything!

We had to cancel all in-person workshops, including the weeklong summer schools. This was as much a disappointment to members as it was to our member facilitators and staff.

We quickly pivoted to online to provide the education support that activists needed as the pandemic took hold. We started with a series of health and safety webinars and moved to online adaptations of core training for stewards and bargaining committee members.

What started as a temporary measure to respond to urgent education needs became our new normal. We had to re-imagine our program, and the first step was to set aside the notion of temporary measures and move to implement a proper online education component to complement our existing face-to-face program.

This was no easy task. Our existing union education program consists of over one hundred different workshops ranging in duration from three hours to weeklong. More importantly, our workshops are designed for face-to-face delivery and with a popular education approach that builds on our members' knowledge and experience, encourages co-learning, and moves them to action. Given how well established our program is, we were determined to maintain the high standard our members and locals expect.

Thanks to the work of our staff and members facilitators, who jumped right in and explored, tested, and learned, we were able to launch our new Online Learning Series.

We are, of course, looking forward to resuming face-to-face workshops and have developed guidelines to ensure that the transition is safe. But when that happens, members will find a new Union Education Program that blends online learning and in-person, which will give them the opportunity to choose what works best.

Member Facilitator Program

We ran one member facilitator training session in February 2020, before the pandemic hit. Half of the new members trained are from equity-seeking groups (not including women).

We ran two advanced facilitator training sessions in November and December 2019 in collaboration with the Canadian Mental Health Association. This training prepares staff and member facilitators to deliver our mental health workshops.

We have recruited great activists to join our program as we continue to reach out to equity-seeking members, and in particular to Black, Indigenous, and racialized members. While we've had to cancel three member facilitator training sessions, we have reorganized the training online.

We shifted our facilitator training priorities to preparing existing member facilitators to deliver our Online Learning Series. We've run 15 sessions and trained 128 members from across the country. We're grateful to the members who have embraced the challenge. We know the transition has not been easy and we could not run the program without them. Staff also embraced online facilitation.

We developed an online facilitation skills training session for representatives and specialists who regularly facilitate our workshops, and for the representatives who are looking to deliver the online bargaining program to their locals.

New workshops and trainings

Bylaw Essentials: A new workshop in the Local Executive Training series, aimed at new executive members and at locals doing a review of their bylaws. It covers what the Constitution requires, principles of strong bylaws, and the importance of clear language.

Violence and Harassment: An updated violence and harassment workshop including new modules on sexual harassment, violence, and domestic violence.

Consent presentation: Part of the opening of all our weeklong schools. We're hoping that naming the issue and opening a conversation about consent will set the right tone and help create safer spaces for members and staff at the school.

Member Engagement: Three-part online training to support our work on Alberta's Bill 32. *Roots 2 Power* series – an online school open to all members focused on organizing, mobilizing, and activism. New member engagement and communicator training workshops (online) in the Local Executive Training series.

Virtual Membership Meetings: New online workshop in the Local Executive Training series that prepares locals to run a membership meeting online. It covers how to use

features in Zoom and other virtual meeting platforms to present reports, move and discuss motions, and vote. The workshop includes a parliamentary procedure refresher and pointers for how to chair a good online meeting.

What Stewards Need to Know about Pensions: New online workshop that helps stewards learn about public pensions and the different types of workplace pension plans. They also explore the role stewards can play to support members in protecting their pension rights.

Online Learning Series: This new series includes 31 workshops to date. Most workshops have been re-designed from existing material and adapted to be delivered online. Some workshops are brand new and reflect the need to address current issues such as virtual general membership meetings, preventing privatization during COVID, and member engagement.

Ombudsperson Program

We have developed a process for the ombudsperson team assigned to virtual events such as the Human Rights Conference and division conventions. Members are able to call a toll-free number or email the ombudsperson during the event and a virtual space is available for one-on-one meetings.

We developed an online training refresher for members and staff who have not had a chance to act as ombudsperson since they were trained or who were trained years ago and needed current skills. We ran three online training sessions for this group.

We did an analysis of regional ombudsperson needs and representation, and started recruitment to fill the gap. We have completed the interview process and are looking forward to training this new group when the time is right.

Labour College of Canada

The new format for Labour College of Canada is extremely successful. Students attend three sessions, six months apart. The program also includes an online portion and project work. It is more flexible than previous programs and the feedback from the CUPE members we have sponsored is very positive.

Since the pandemic, only one in-person session has taken place. The program is fully available online until the in-person sessions can resume.

There are 22 CUPE members currently registered in Labour College. Some are getting ready to complete the program while others started this summer.

Supporting others in CUPE

Eastern Indigenous Council: We were pleased to support the inaugural meeting for CUPE's Eastern Indigenous Council.

Training for new trial panelists: We developed training for the newly-appointed trial panelists. We ran English and French online training sessions and trained 63 members for this new role.

Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan: We're working with the Ontario Division to support their work on their Action Plan, in particular supporting the development of leadership training for Black, Indigenous, and racialized women members.

Anti-Racism Strategy consultations: We supported the Human Rights Branch in the design and facilitation of the consultations that led to the development of CUPE's Anti-Racism Strategy.

Human Rights Conference: our whole branch worked to support the Human Rights Conference. Union education staff helped with design, facilitation, technical support, and logistics.

Union Education by the numbers

From October Convention 2019 to May 31, 2021:

Number of in-person workshops: 580
Number of participants in-person workshops: 9,790
Number of workshops cancelled due to COVID-19: 252
Number of online education sessions: 609
Number of participants in online education: 9,324
Number of workshops in the new Online Learning Series: 31
Number of member facilitators trained to deliver online education: 128
Number of online facilitation training sessions for members: 15
Number of staff trained to deliver online education: 116
Number of online facilitation training sessions for staff: 10
Number of hours spent re-imagining our program: boundless!



2021 CUPE National
Convention

Organizing and Regional Services

ORGANIZING AND REGIONAL SERVICES

François Bellemare, Managing Director
Daria Ivanochko, National Managing Director (retired)
Chantale-Grenon Nyenhuis, National Assistant Director
Nathalie Stringer, National Assistant Director
Tony Cristiano, National Assistant Director

I want to acknowledge the hard work and leadership which Daria Ivanochko provided the Department during her time as Managing Director. Her commitment to CUPE and her professionalism were an inspiration, and she left an imprint in Organizing and Regional Services. We all wish her a healthy and happy retirement.

The time between the last convention and now has been defined by the COVID-19 pandemic. This extraordinary event has affected us in ways we could not have anticipated. At the time of writing this report we have been working remotely for over a year. The relationships we have with our staff, our activists and our members have pivoted, and we have collectively been tossed out of our comfort zones. Despite this upheaval we have persevered. CUPE's commitment to technology has allowed us to seamlessly pivot to providing service, access, and communication to our members remotely and electronically. We have trained staff in remote bargaining and how to conduct virtual hearings. We now organize new members and sign union cards electronically and file certification applications in this way. We hold membership meetings, ratification votes and elections electronically.

As a result of working remotely we have increased regular communication with staff so that no one is left behind nor left isolated. We have recognized the value of collaboration and are connecting in ways we had never considered nor had the technology to do so in the past.

Although we yearn for the return to face to face interactions, we recognize the value of electronic platforms which allow for greater participation in meetings and educationals. We see the increased activism from part time and younger workers. We are committed to keeping the positive elements we have learned during this time and integrating them into our future work. None of us can predict what this future will look like nor when the pandemic will end but we know that our commitment to the members remains unshakable.

The Organizing and Regional Services Department continues to provide support to the union by reviewing and approving organizing proposals and requests submitted under the National Defence Fund and works with the directors to ensure that resources are available to provide our locals and members with the resources and tools necessary to successfully take on the challenges in the workplace and in the region.

At our annual regional staff conferences, which were held remotely in 2021, we noted that increased communication was an essential tool in dealing with the challenges presented by working remotely. Every region held regular meetings with all staff throughout the lockdown periods and continues to make this a regular occurrence.

In addition to implementing actions mandated by the 2019 National Convention, we continue to do the core work of the union that has been directed by past conventions. We have completed the work on Strategic Bargaining support and resources for staff as well as resources for first contract bargaining. These resources complement the resources available for members through union education.

Staff Recruitment and Training for new recruits

We continue to actively recruit potential national representatives from amongst our members and activists. In addition, we launched online recruitment through Facebook and we are pleased to report that it has increased the applicant base. The Department continues to work towards recruiting potential staff who reflect the membership of CUPE.

We have amended our internship program and have expanded opportunities for personal development for recruits. We continue to receive feedback and assess how this program supports potential staff and adapts to answer the needs and requirements to ensure success.

Organizing

We are very pleased that every region has prioritized organizing. The work of our organizers is complemented and supported by members who assist in campaigns, drives and representation votes. Our organizers report that there is a significant increase in the number of challenges to organizing by employers at the labour board. When we add the challenges of COVID, it is astonishing that any organizing occurs at all, yet we consistently bring new groups into CUPE.

We have used electronic platforms to connect with employees who wish to join CUPE. We have used electronic cards as membership evidence, and we have conducted labour board hearings remotely. These processes, although successful, do not replace the desire to return to face to face organizing.

The organizing of unorganized workers is vital to building the labour movement, increasing CUPE's strength and giving us all stronger voice in our workplaces and communities. CUPE is proud of our organizing successes in an increasingly challenging climate.

Indeed, despite these challenges, CUPE continues to organize new members and grow our union. At the time of writing this report and since the last convention, CUPE has organized over 5,974 new members in 103 new units.

In several regions restructuring continues. After a prolonged and difficult campaign period we successfully welcomed 8,790 members into CUPE in health care in Manitoba. This campaign, which pitted CUPE against the Manitoba Government Employees Union (MGEU) not only took the dedication of organizers but all staff in the region. The process of integrating all these new members was a daunting one but, with a newly merged health care local, this was made significantly easier. We know that restructuring is also on the horizon in the school board sector in Manitoba, along with further restructuring in health care and in many sectors.

Ontario will also see a wave of restructuring that will affect hospitals, children's aid societies and other public institutions.

In Quebec we have organized paramedical groups and local firefighters.

Pan-Canadian Federal Certifications

CUPE represents workers at many airlines operating in Canada: Air Canada (including Rouge), WestJet (Swoop and Encore), Air Transat, First Air, Canadian North, Calm Air, Sunwing, Flair Airlines and PAL Airlines. Cathay Pacific closed its two bases in Canada, so we said goodbye to those members. Air Georgian went out of business but is now operating as Pivot, and our members are slowly being called back to work. Globally, though, to say that the airlines sector has faced unprecedented challenges over the course of the last two years would be a gross understatement.

The pandemic has affected all of us, but no sector has been impacted more than the airlines. Initially, the work of our members was desperately needed to repatriate Canadians who were abroad as borders the world over were closing. But shortly thereafter, round after round of massive layoffs occurred, as travel plummeted. Only a mere fraction of our membership was still flying.

Our efforts since March 2020 have focused on two principal areas. Health and safety, and ensuring there was federal support for airlines, but more specifically for workers in that sector.

Flight attendants were among the first workers to be exposed to the virus, and our components and locals had to fight their employers in order to get proper personal protective equipment because the focus of the carriers, at least at the very beginning of the crisis, was more on "business as usual" than on protecting the workers.

Significant progress has been made in terms of health and safety but we will need to remain vigilant. If we get complacent, the gains made will dwindle away. Throughout the pandemic, we were definitely confronted with the fact that in some of our collective agreements, health and safety language needed to be a lot tighter. That is one of our priorities.

Since March 2020, we have been busy trying to secure financial assistance from the federal government. It has proven a rather frustrating exercise, even though measures were put in place to assist workers across the country. As we are slowly emerging from the pandemic, we are putting pressure on the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the airline sector regains the vitality they had not that long ago.

Amidst all this, there has been some good news. WestJet achieved its first collective agreement – always a milestone, but an exceptional one given the context in which it was done. And we are working hard on achieving first collective agreements for our newest groups.

Our RCMP local is making strides towards achieving its first collective agreement. There are challenges along the way, but our members are well organized and can push back successfully.

All this is possible thanks to the work of our members in pan-Canadian federal certifications, as well as the dedicated staff who work with them.

Current Regional and Assistant Regional Directors

Finally, thanks to the staff of the Organizing and Regional Services Department: our regional directors, whose reports follow, and the assistant directors and administrative staff at the national office, who have been generous and open with their time in assisting me in my new role as Managing Director. I look forward to the many projects we will work on in the future.

ATLANTIC

Tracey Pinder, Regional Director

Over the past two years this region has had to engage in a number of fightbacks against conservatism and the attempt at eroding gains.

Newfoundland and Labrador (NL)

NL has seen two provincial elections take place and while the Liberals remained in power, this time with a majority, they also have a different leader in Andrew Furey who replaced Dwight Ball. In 2019 many CUPE members and staff worked hard to get the new leader of the NDP Alison Coffin elected in a tough race to the finish line as well as two other members representing the NDP as MHAs.

At the end of 2019, in a surprise moment, CUPE was alerted to the fact that the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees (NAPE) had met with government and signed a two-year extension agreement. A deal with modest wage increases and a promise to bring forward to the Sponsor body of the jointly-trusted Provident 10 pension plan, a proposed claw back of any gains the members might be entitled to with the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) enhancement. The Registered Nurses Union of Newfoundland and Labrador (RNUNL) soon followed suit. Government then presented this same offer to CUPE just before year end. CUPE obviously disagreed and stated we were prepared to bargain and would not be accepting any concessions. In order to prevent any deal from being successful, CUPE had to ensure IBEW and AAHP would stand with them and resist any such move at the Sponsor Board.

At the beginning of 2020, members prepared to bargain with the government as they did in the past. It was very difficult to get meeting dates. By the fall of 2020, with bargaining moving at a snail's pace, CUPE reached out to government regarding the offer made in December 2019 and agreed we could live with the two-year extension, but it would be without the CPP concession. All parties continued to bargain. In October, the Sponsor body of Provident 10 finally met to discuss the CPP issue. After it failed on the union side, they were informed no such offer would be agreed upon by this board. Pension concession defeated!

Not until government was preparing to drop the writ and call an election, did they come back to CUPE with the offer of a two-year extension without the pension concession. A deal that was ultimately signed and ratified by the members.

An election for the ages followed suit.

While Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) had remained relatively COVID-19 free during the pandemic when the rest of the country was suffering devastating outbreaks, the third wave landed squarely on the rock. In the midst of a contentiously called election, Avalon became an example of community spread. Despite cries to postpone the election and the vast majority of poll workers quitting, it was not to be. A pivot to a mail-in ballot was fraught and several extensions to the cut off date for voting were made. Regardless of the outcome, there were going to be legal challenges to this election. And so, the NL NDP have proceeded in that vein.

Unfortunately, the leader of the NDP lost her seat. This leaves only two representatives in the House of Assembly representing the NDP.

In March of 2020, the world changed. The majority of the western world acknowledged that we were in a global pandemic and it would have to be contained.

While the pandemic affected NL, there were few cases at that time. The province acted quickly to shut things down. This however resulted in many of our members, particularly in the municipal and education sector, being laid off.

The Atlantic bubble had allowed for at least some tourism to happen over the summer.

Generally, everyone previously laid off had returned to work with the exception of school cafeteria workers and some seasonal municipal workers.

By fall of 2020, things were beginning to return to what would now be our new normal. Cases were minimal and remained in the single digits. Things were beginning to relax as we watched the rest of Canada struggle to contain their cases.

But February 2021 would turn out to be the end of the relaxed atmosphere. The numbers in NL were slowly increasing. There was confirmation that the variants were on the island. Once this was confirmed, the province moved into alert level 5, meaning complete lockdown.

NL had not escaped the third wave. The province (bureaucrats as government had been dissolved) and labour came together and acted quickly. This resulted in the virus being contained prior to the health system being completely overwhelmed. But the members who had held up the system for the last year were exhausted. At time of writing, there are still some cases on the island and with the new variants there are more cases in Central and

Western zones, where previously the Avalon was the hot zone.

Nova Scotia (NS)

After coming through Bill 148 that stripped collective agreements and bargaining rights, CUPE settled a majority of their provincial pattern contracts by mid-2019. While they were six-year agreements, four and almost five years in some cases had already elapsed. Acute, Long-Term Care, Home Care, Developmental Services and Education would have a small reprieve before preparing to head back to the table.

The *Charter* challenge launched by all the unions is continuing to make its way through the courts.

Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) saw many challenges and some gains over the past two years. As the Department of Education's pre-primary program moved to full implementation across the province, centres were left scrambling as qualified ECEs left for the school-based programs because it meant standardized wages, benefits and pensions. Centre-based ECEs continue to campaign for the same treatment. The vast majority of centres in the province are privately owned. The Early Years division of the Department of Education, as well as the Premier, have confirmed that they will be early adopters of the federal program for universal child care. The provincial cost share campaign continues.

The education sector will see the Nova Scotia Council of School Board Unions come together for the first time, with all eight Regional Centres for Education participating. This is historic as our locals have been working diligently to present a united front and work toward one provincial agreement.

The shortage of Continuing Care Assistants (CCA) in the province had been an issue prior to the pandemic. Many come into the sector, but the physical demands of the work with relatively low pay means that younger workers do not stay. They move on to become either Registered or Licensed Practical Nurses or leave the health sector entirely.

This has resulted in the government introducing a lower paid classification of Long-Term Care Assistants (LTCA) and Home Support Assistants (HSA) in an ill-advised effort to deal with staff shortages. The idea being that relieving CCAs or some of the nonpersonal care work will appease them into staying and the lower paid classification will be incentivised into obtaining the CCA credentials. In a sector where the vast majority of operators are private-for-profit organizations, this effort is doomed to fail. The sector continues to push government to fund the 4.1 hours of CCA hands on care and compensate fairly for the

notoriously underpaid care work sector. This round of bargaining, the pressure will continue.

In April-May of 2020, the province scrambled to put measures in place as the virus took hold in several Long-Term Care (LTC) homes including one of the largest, Northwood. The largest outbreak in the province saw a total of 246 residents and 114 staff test positive, and 53 residents die. A report was commissioned as a result. It led to seven key recommendations that had significant impact for labour, because it highlighted the need for the development and the implementation of a robust human resources plan. As mentioned earlier, the LTCA and HSA strategy is ill-advised and demonstrated through the pandemic how it is failing to recruit.

After watching the horror play out in the rest of the country, while enjoying a relatively relaxed summer and fall, Nova Scotians observed the crisis in NL play out over late winter. CUPE members in the Atlantic region enjoyed a small reprieve before the third wave caught up to NS.

At time of writing there is a province wide lockdown. The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is seeing mass community spread of the virus and very few regions of the province remain untouched. In previous waves the outbreaks had mainly involved the HRM, but this time Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) and smaller towns are dealing with their first cases.

The new Premier Rankin, who came to power following the leadership race after Stephen McNeil stepped down, is dealing with the worst the province has seen. The measures put in place in the first and second wave are not showing the quick success that we were privileged to experience in waves one and two in the province. The virus variants are proving more difficult to contain.

All sectors have continued to bargain, with the exception of Acute Care, whose halt was expected given the numbers of COVID patients in hospitals and on ventilators.

There is much speculation that an election will soon be called however, with the example of NL in the recent past, one would hope that the Liberals would see that it does not make sense to proceed at this time.

Both divisions and the region have been working steadily to provide a more seamless vision for each province that will see more engagement from our membership. We are indeed planning for what is sure to be a fight regarding fiscal restraint as we move out of crisis mode and into the "reality" of the payback required for all the money spent.

Our goal is to continue to educate and empower our members to recognise their strength and leadership in moving the working class forward. Gains are still a possibility and indeed a must. The last two years have been

a test of the strength and resolve of the region. Our members have shown that they are up for the challenge and that they will not shy away from defending and advancing their rights as workers and members of their communities.

The pandemic has shown us what it means to come together and how much strength can and will emerge in the toughest of times.

The challenges are by no means over and our resolve will continue to be tested on many fronts. The CUPE members of the Atlantic Region will be ready!

MARITIMES

Sandy Harding, Regional Director

Resiliency

Our members and staff in both our provinces have been extremely busy for the past two years. The global pandemic has presented many challenges. In the workplace, there have been many adjustments and in New Brunswick having to “do more with less” seems to be the common theme for CUPE members who are exhausted from the lack of personnel and resources.

In Prince Edward Island, it seems to be a bit better regarding resources and help to the frontlines. Unlike New Brunswick, their government has made investments into the public service instead of austerity measures.

A mobility agreement was negotiated at the beginning of the lockdown in New Brunswick and at the heart of this agreement was pay continuance for members. This was a bold move that resulted in some members being sent to other workplaces to perform duties of other classifications when the need arose. In exchange for this flexibility provided by the unions, we obtained a no-layoff guarantee and pay continuance for all those who were told to stay home. CUPE was the leader to ensure these agreements had the protections that members needed. Our mobility agreement terms became the template to follow for all other public sector unions.

Staff in the region are amazing and have worked tirelessly to pivot and adapt to a new way of doing things. This was done literally overnight. Working remotely is not without challenges but we can see definite positives and takeaways that will carry through post pandemic times. Despite the difficult changes, there was no interruption in service to our members, nor did our CUPE divisions and locals sacrifice their internal democracy. CUPE NB and CUPE PEI were the first two divisions to hold virtual conventions in 2020 and 2021 in Canada. Many locals pivoted to online meetings and conventions. It was not easy, but democracy found a way. CUPE showed its resiliency yet again and we should be extremely proud of what we do and how we do it.

Political Challenges

Today, both provinces in the Maritimes Region are under Conservative governments. In New Brunswick, Premier Blaine Higgs held a snap election in September 2020. The Conservatives went from a minority government to a majority government. On PEI, a by-election produced the same outcome, where the Conservatives went from minority to majority.

Shortly after the election, Premier Higgs announced a reduction in the wage offer at our provincial bargaining tables. He introduced his plan to freeze the wages of all public sector workers for one year. He then said his new bargaining mandate would be reduced from 4% over 4 years (1% a year for 4 years) to 3% over 4 years (3 years of 1% and 1 year at 0%). This “Zeros for our Heroes” announcement came in just before Christmas 2020. This was insulting for our members, who were already feeling unappreciated for their essential work during the pandemic.

In NB, the recent provincial do-nothing budget foreshadows austerity measures and cuts to the public service. It is when the times are rough that we need visionary leadership and socially responsible investments. But Blaine Higgs is Blaine Higgs: he failed to make a single major investment in the public sector. That is because unionized workers are his go-to scapegoats for the underperforming economy. His ideological blinders are causing him to miss a major opportunity to put money back in our local economies by investing in the front lines, in the public sector.

Instead, Higgs put all his hopes in the least pro-community players you could find: big businesses and offshore real estate investment trusts. This is worrisome, as those private sector hawks have always taken as much as they could, leaving only crumbs for their own workers and next to nothing for our communities.

PEI has fared much better than NB, for the simple fact that Premier Dennis King has not used the crisis to divide and conquer, but to unite and build. In this year’s budget, the PEI government focused on key economic multiplier drivers. They implemented many CUPE recommendations, with health care system improvements, more child care spaces, more educational staff positions and many community-support measures. Nonetheless, we remain concerned at how this government will behave after the pandemic, as they refuse to implement the necessary progressive taxation changes needed to guarantee the durability of their progressive measures.

Health Care

CUPE 1252 (NB health care workers) and CUPE 805 (PEI health care workers) worked tirelessly to deliver good health care despite working short, equipment shortages and other frustrations produced by chronic under-resourcing.

Cracks in our health care system have been exposed by the pandemic, and the public is turning an attentive ear to the fragile situation created by underfunding and privatization in public services. People see workers being COVID fatigued, understaffed, under-resourced. In NB, the government is trying to channel staff frustration against the union by reclassification reviews. Creating internal strife by moving members out of CUPE and into other unions is nothing new. Thankfully, those manipulations are often thwarted by the NB Labour Board, who recognized that CUPE is the right union for LPNs and health professionals. However, we were not successful with our objection at the Labour Board to the reclassification of our paramedics from CUPE 4848. The board upheld the government's reclassification and these members were moved to New Brunswick Union, the National Union of Public and General Employees affiliate. This seems to be the government's new tactic to try and weaken CUPE's density in the province.

Education Sector

May they be in post-secondary education or in K-12, our members adapted to online learning and major adjustments to onsite learning were made when classes resumed. Ever-changing rules with little or no consultation and advanced notice caused major confusion and frustration for leaders and members. Our PEI locals were admirable in raising the alarm on unsafe and unrealistic back-to-school plans.

Municipal Sector

Aggressive municipal bargaining and regressive local governments have pushed two of our locals on lockout and one on strike in NB. This reminds us of all of the importance of electing labour-friendly candidates on municipal councils. Bargaining has been more difficult than in the past, however, the negotiated agreements see better wage increases than elsewhere in the public sector, for the most part.

Community Care

As a whole, this sector remains underpaid and, in most cases, extremely precarious. The New Brunswick Community Care Unions (NBCSU) has been working diligently on building capacity under their umbrella to have greater power with advocacy work for the sector. Through their effort and with the help of ally organizations, some legislative progress was made. A plan is currently being developed by our organizer to achieve better union density.

Long-Term Care

The NB Council of Nursing Home Unions (NBCNHU) ratified a collective agreement in 2020 which was no small feat in

the midst of the pandemic and under the severe restrictions that *Bill 17* imposed on the collective bargaining process. Recruitment and retention issues remain, so the local did not skip a beat to prepare members for the new round of bargaining. The NBCNHU was diligent in reinforcing internal cohesion, notably by leading a campaign to improve the inclusion of Licensed Practical Nurses in the bargaining unit's work.

On the Island, the aging population is increasing the workload of long-term care workers and is creating a stress as many employees are approaching retirement age. Thankfully, CUPE PEI and nursing home locals are dealing with a more collaborative government, who has shown more concern for senior citizens' needs.

Crown Corporations

CUPE 963, which represent NB Liquor workers, reached a tentative agreement in September 2020 and it was ratified by the members. Premier Higgs refused to uphold the deal. This was done so he could impose his new wage restraint mandate. We are currently at the Labour Board in a bad faith bargaining complaint.

Breaking the Mandate – Bargaining Forward

Our campaign is in the 4th and final phase. On top of numerous bad faith bargaining complaints, statutory freeze complaints and unfair labour practices complaints filed with the NB Labour Board, the provincial government is abusing procedural stall tactics. These tactics are added to prevent deadlock declarations. Nonetheless, many provincial locals have already declared deadlock situations. A comprehensive coordinated bargaining plan for our provincial bargaining teams is set for the fall of 2021. Mass membership strike votes are to be held in early September 2021. Mass strike preparation training is happening province-wide. Over 25,000 members are at the table now, and other public sector unions are in a similar predicament as we are in. CUPE will go ahead with the coordinated bargaining plan.

Our CUPE NB and PEI divisions updated strategic planning sessions to give them the tools and plans to move forward on behalf of our members. Like others in CUPE, we are fighting regressive legislation, pushing for real wage increases, lobbying governments and educating members.

The recovery is coming, but the real question is "for whom?" Will political leaders favour corporations and those who already have more than enough, or will they put ordinary people first? It is time to move from the defensive to the offensive. We will do our best to ensure our members are the driving force in the coming post-pandemic recovery. Our members in the Maritimes are up to the challenge and will continue to work hard for the public.

QUEBEC

Marc Ranger, Regional Director
Carl Dubé, Assistant Director
Marie-Hélène Bélanger, Assistant Director
Céline Giguère, Acting Assistant Director

Since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, our union life has taken place amid significant challenges posed by the application of public health measures. We have stepped up interventions in the workplace, investigated actual working conditions, demanded essential corrective measures and called on public health authorities to support our demands.

However, the pandemic should not obscure the fact that here in Québec, we will soon be entering the fourth year of the right-wing CAQ government led by François Legault.

Under the pretext of undertaking essential modernization of occupational health and safety, Bill 59 constitutes a real throwback to the past. It grants economic advantages to employers, markedly reduces efforts aimed at prevention and adds various measures that will limit the possibility for workers to obtain fair compensation for employment injuries.

At the time of writing, CUPE is in coordinated negotiations with three other FTQ-affiliated unions and has just obtained the first comprehensive tentative agreement in public sector negotiations after more than a year and a half of bargaining. More than 36,000 CUPE members in health and education are affected. It's a good deal for our members which sets out salary parameters for hundreds of thousands of government workers.

The health and social services sectors have been particularly affected by the pandemic. Workers are running out of steam in their efforts to maintain public health care, while the government has been operating with a series of ministerial decrees.

The university sector has experienced two major strikes since the last convention. First, CUPE 1186 was on strike for almost five months before concluding a new collective agreement in July 2019. Then, in the fall of 2019, the approximately 1,800 UQÀM support workers of CUPE 1294 had to call an 11-day strike at the start of the university year. In March 2021, the Tribunal once again ruled in favour of support staff at UQÀM on the question of pay equity, an issue that has been going on for more than nine years. This decision should apply to all universities in the UQ network.

In the maritime transportation sector, Port of Montreal dockworkers, who have been without a collective agreement since 2018, are facing an employer, the

Maritime Employers Association (MEA), which has refused to negotiate in good faith from the beginning. There were 32 days of hearings at the CIRB on the issue of essential services. After a 19-day strike in August 2020, a truce of seven months and a very unusual period of mediation, the employer unilaterally modified job security and then work schedules, causing a brand-new labour dispute. After five days of strike, the federal Liberal government passed back-to-work legislation and imposed dispute arbitration. Fortunately, following an NDP amendment, the notion of "last best offer" was removed from the bill. The battle continues on the ground and in the courts. We must recognize the exceptional work of CUPE 375 and our staff in these highly-publicized negotiations.

As for railway workers at the Port of Montreal, they have also been in negotiations with the Maritime Employers Association for about two years. Over the past two years, five new locals have joined CUPE. The maritime transportation sector has not seen job losses due to the pandemic.

The education sector represents some 11,000 CUPE members in school service centres and colleges (CEGEPs). The impact of the pandemic on education has been enormous. Complete closure of schools in March 2020, then a gradual return until the end of classes in June 2020. The return to school in September 2020 took place under new strict health measures. Ministerial decrees set the working conditions for our members, including the possibility to be transferred to work in other sectors, including the health sector. Emergency child care services remained open during the weeks when schools were closed, and no COVID-19 premiums were paid to our workers who remained on the job to provide the service. With regard to CEGEPs and colleges, the majority of courses have been offered remotely and the majority of staff have been teleworking since March 2020. Obviously, some employee groups such as maintenance and security personnel, or laboratory technicians, cannot work remotely and remained at work.

The municipal sector, with more than 300 groups representing approximately 34,000 members, has been severely affected by the pandemic and is struggling to recover. At the height of the crisis, this sector recorded more than 9,000 layoffs.

Our intervention with governments resulted in the announcement in September 2020 of an assistance fund of \$800 million for municipalities.

In spite of the circumstances, we are maintaining an average annual increase of 2.25% at the bargaining tables.

As a follow-up to Bill 15, an *Act to foster the financial health and sustainability of municipal defined benefit pension plans*, Superior Court Judge Benoît Moulin rendered a decision in early July 2020 that has been overdue for more than one year. We won the indexation component for retirees. However, this same right has not been recognized for active participants and in our opinion, several aspects of this law must still be invalidated. We are awaiting dates at the Court of Appeal.

Bill 68, allowing the establishment of target benefit pension plans, was tabled on October 8, 2020 by the Minister of Finance. CUPE fiercely opposed it and worked closely with the FTQ. Unfortunately, on December 11, 2020, the bill was adopted. As a result, it will now be possible to set up a target benefit pension plan and even convert DB to TB pension plans, regardless of the sector concerned.

The ground transportation sector is grouped within the Provincial Council for the Ground Transportation Sector (CPSTT). This allows us to get a better view of the organization and direction of the new governance body, the *Autorité régionale de transport métropolitain (ARTM)*, which regroups the three transportation companies of metropolitan Montreal: STM, RTL and STL, as well as the Metropolitan Transport Network (RTM). All transportation companies have been hit hard by the pandemic and the ARTM has demanded major cuts. According to studies, a return to post-pandemic passenger ridership won't take place until 2022. The ARTM has asked all transportation companies to reduce their maximum remuneration by more than \$152.4 million over three years, an amount which represents approximately 17% of the expected shortfall in earnings of \$870 million.

In the energy sector, the last two years have been very intense for all locals due to the pandemic. Two major outbreaks took place in Baie-James generating stations and at the Romaine River worksite. Despite this, COVID-19 contamination remains much lower among our members than in the general population. Hydro-Québec members whose tasks allow it will remain teleworking at least until the fall of 2021. Unions at Hydro-Québec are currently covered by a collective agreement which expires on December 31, 2023.

In addition to important public sector bargaining, the social affairs sector has been strained by COVID-19. In addition, the government granted unfair bonuses which

led to a loss of morale in our workplaces, where exhaustion was already present long before the pandemic.

In the mixed sector, despite the diversity of the locals, common issues were experienced by members, including more layoffs in armored truck transport.

For La Capitale Insurance, CUPE 2310, the merger between La Capitale and SSQ Insurance is now official, but we face numerous challenges.

Lastly, the sector is welcoming a new local, CUPE 7300, the *Fraternité des travailleurs et travailleuses du préhospitalier du Québec* (Brotherhood of Quebec Pre-hospital Workers) representing more than 850 members divided into 18 bargaining units across Quebec.

In the communications sector, a major agreement was reached at Videotron, CUPE 2815. A strike was a real possibility. Overseas subcontracting as well as the outsourcing of work clearly stand out as the major challenges in coming years in the telecommunications sector.

In the broadcasting sector, the main challenge is to remain relevant in an environment in which, thanks to the various "streaming" platforms, competition is coming from around the world. The struggle to maintain local news broadcasts is therefore of paramount importance in this context.

If adopted, Bill C-10 could be decisive for the survival of our Canadian broadcasting system, which is under attack from all sides by the "GAFAs" of this world. The CPSC (Provincial Council for the Communications Sector) and our Research Branch have made numerous interventions with the CRTC and the various levels of government.

CUPE's Job Evaluation Branch in Quebec will closely monitor the coming into force of new federal pay equity legislation over the next two years.

ONTARIO

Joe Matasic, Regional Director
Alison Davidson, Assistant Director
Ann Lennarson, Assistant Director
Fred Ho, Assistant Director
Jo-Ann Breton, Assistant Director
Jacqueline Lancaster, Acting Assistant Director

Since the pandemic started, CUPE members in Ontario have had their collective agreement rights over-ridden by orders and regulations issued under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, as well as extending those orders through *Bill 195, Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act*. These collective agreement over-rides have resulted in redeploying workers to alternative worksites, negated work-of-the-bargaining-unit protections, cancelled vacations and amended schedules, all causing significant disruption to the lives of front-line workers.

Most of these orders, described above, affected the health care, long-term care, municipal and the social services sectors. Sector teams, with the assistance of resource staff and working with elected leaders, are continually adapting and responding to the changing environment to best serve our members in Ontario.

In addition to championing our members' collective agreement rights, health and safety remains a top issue that we had to fight for all through the pandemic. In the beginning of the pandemic period, the province refused to acknowledge that COVID can be spread through airborne transmission thus making access to Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) very difficult, if not impossible. It was the collective efforts of lobbying and workplace activism, including rallies, petitions and coordinated grievances, that pushed the Chief Medical Officer of Health to revise their directives to ensure proper PPE was provided to staff treating suspected or confirmed cases of COVID. CUPE's national health and safety staff along with servicing representatives worked tirelessly during the pandemic to provide clear information for our members about COVID, safety protocols to remain safe and how to pressure employers to keep CUPE members safe in the workplaces.

Government interim funding in 2020 and intense lobbying have led to fewer layoffs than anticipated. Job losses and layoffs have occurred mainly among casual, temporary, and part-time workers. Most of these layoffs affected equity-seeking workers who worked predominantly in low wage, precarious positions, yet another example of how the pandemic affect racialized workers.

When the pandemic started, bargaining stalled or completely stopped because of the lockdown. However, most locals and their employers have adapted to working

and bargaining in the new virtual world and we have slowly resumed bargaining and activated regular union activities. Here are some highlights from our major sectors on how the pandemic impacted our members and what's ahead post-pandemic.

Health Care and Long-Term Care

The health care and long-term care sectors were the most heavily impacted. Initially, workers had difficulties obtaining proper PPE and resorted to extreme measures to protect themselves. Our elected leaders from OCHU and HCWCC worked with other health care unions to secure access to PPE for our members.

The Ford government announced temporary pandemic top-up pay for front-line workers at the height of the crisis to acknowledge the challenges and dangers faced by workers. However, this top-up pay was limited to certain workers and the inconsistencies in who qualified and who did not qualify for this pay gave rise to divisions and disparities among workers working in the same workplaces. CUPE/OCHU launched the *Respect Us! Protect Us! Pay Us!* campaign calling on the government to respect our collective agreements, provide full access to proper PPE and make pandemic pay permanent for everyone.

The Long-Term Care (LTC) sector was particularly hit hard the past year, resulting in high numbers of casualties and infections among the elderly and frail, leading to severe outbreaks. The government launched the LTC Commission to investigate what went wrong and what could be done to avoid future crisis. The report showed how the severity of underfunding, understaffing and inadequate/antiquated infrastructure opened the door causing high casualties and damage to an already depleted sector. CUPE is calling for the government to act on the Commission's findings and immediately provide proper funding for more full-time positions, increased personal care, additional funding for permanent wage increases to stabilize the sector and fast-track the implementation of the promised four-hour care standards (that CUPE and our allies have been championing for over 20 years), among other demands to improve the quality of care.

School Boards

Schools were closed following the March break in 2020 and stayed closed until the end of that school year due to the lockdown. These closures did result in layoffs of casual staff, but permanent staff were spared the pink slips. When schools reopened in September, virtual schools were offered to parents and students.

Health and Safety has been one of the most important issues in this sector and raised repeatedly by the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU) with the government. OSBCU also pushed the government to hire additional staff to meet the increased cleaning requirements, which has led to more cleaning staff being hired. However, there have been other layoffs including library technicians, language instructors and others.

Funding and the introduction of virtual learning options for students will remain an issue for our members in the school board sector, as we migrate out of the pandemic.

Universities

Revenue from government regulated sources has been purposely cut to drive changes to the sector and the focus/operations of the institutions. Before the pandemic, funding was 3-4% below previous years because of an unfunded 10% tuition fee reduction. The pandemic only exacerbated the situation when the only unregulated sources of funding – international students – was disrupted.

Joint Health and Safety Committees on most university campuses were largely ignored at the start of the pandemic and were not involved in campus re-opening planning or safety protocols discussions. The sector responded by developing sector-specific checklists and training on how to utilize and implement this tool to enhance safety in the workplace. The sector also hosted webinars on Health and Safety and made it a top focus at this year's virtual sector conference.

There were job losses in the sector during the pandemic, mainly in the food service groups, but also ESL instructors and some custodial/maintenance/parking staff when campuses closed, and when some classes migrated to on-line.

While it is clear that the change in funding model and the restructuring example paved by Laurentian University will shape and impact this sector moving forward, what remains unclear is what the campuses will look like when classes resume post-pandemic and how that will impact our members' work.

Municipalities

In July of 2020, under the Federal-Provincial Safe-Restart funding program, Ontario municipalities were promised \$4 billion in funding to offset municipal operational costs. \$2 billion for operational costs and an additional \$2 billion for public transit systems.

Municipal cost-saving measures during the pandemic and the Safe-Restart funding will allow municipalities to completely mitigate the financial impact of the pandemic in 2020. However, it is yet to be seen whether service disruptions and potential layoffs will be mitigated in 2021. There were layoffs in the library and recreation groups that mainly affected part-time employees. Privatization and alternative service delivery is a threat as municipalities look for ways to offload the costs of providing public services.

Bargaining in this sector, post-pandemic, will be difficult within an austerity climate and employers will seek concessions, flexibility in hours of work and temporary work, using the pandemic as the reason to push their agendas. Privatization, modernization and the push for "efficiencies" will continue to be pursued by employers to restructure how municipal services will be delivered.

Social Services

The Social Services sector faced many challenges during the pandemic. Many of the services offered in this sector are hands on and require in person interactions such as Child Care, Developmental Services, Children's Aid Societies, and others. But the government failed to recognize this and did not mandate PPE, proper funding or temporary pandemic top-up pay to most of the workers.

The sector responded with strategic lobbying and campaigning to highlight the indifference shown to the sector and eventually some of the workers who provide hands-on care like developmental services workers were given their due recognition with pandemic pay.

While there were some layoffs in the sector, the bulk of the damage was inflicted on the child care sector, which saw 174 centres closed due to low enrolment during the lockdown (only two were CUPE workplaces). It remains to be seen how this sector will rebound with the recent announcement of \$10 child care by the federal government.

Many of the other sub-sectors face an unclear future as the government is pushing for "reforms" and "modernization" on how social services should be delivered in this sector. Staff and elected leaders are working hard to ensure our voices are heard at these restructuring tables to ensure our members' jobs and future are protected.

Looking Ahead

This pandemic has shown the importance of essential public services and how the services our members provide make a difference in people's lives and well-being. As we prepare for both a provincial and federal election in the

next year, it is critical that public services remain an important election issue, so we elect a government that values and invests in the public services our communities need.

MANITOBA

Lee McLeod, Regional Director

Introduction

CUPE members in Manitoba have continued to stand up and fight back against the years long attack by the Progressive Conservative provincial government, and they proudly stepped up to challenge the province's anti-labour legislation. There were a number of victories in the last two years including a major court victory against the "Public Services Sustainability Act", legislation that interfered with and threatened free collective bargaining. In June 2020, the court ruled that the Progressive Conservative government interfered with the constitutional rights of our members that are protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Despite the fact that the court decision clearly and unequivocally upheld the right to free collective bargaining, the Pallister government has appealed the court's decision and CUPE members stand ready to fight the province's continued demand that the wage concessions of the overturned legislation be implemented.

A Global Pandemic

In the early days of the pandemic, it became clear that much was owed to public sector workers. And yet, as our members were fighting just to get what they were owed, the attacks continued at bargaining tables and through legislation. At the bargaining table, the province falsely cited the costs of fighting the pandemic as the basis for austerity measures that would dramatically reduce fairness for public sector workers.

It was in this context that CUPE members, with the help of their locals, were unwavering and took on the challenges of protecting frontline members who were forced to put their lives at risk simply by showing up for work everyday. Members were also on the front lines of advocating for safety on the job, and for the right to know and be informed of hazards. They fought hard for personal protective equipment (PPE) and the representation needed to ensure members were treated fairly. While workers bravely took their roles on the front lines, their fellow members worked with CUPE staff who dedicated their efforts to support members and locals to ensure that they could provide the services that were so desperately needed.

Attacks Through Legislation

During this same time, legislative attacks and actions by the provincial government continued without abatement. Legislation was crafted to weaken the *Labour Relations Act*, to reduce protections for striking workers forced into

job action, to end access to arbitration in protracted labour disputes and to generally weaken unions and the union movement. The government has also proposed sweeping changes to the public school system in Manitoba and plans to do away with locally elected trustees in favour of centralized governance that will strip local communities of their autonomy. Within this dangerous legislation lies "cost savings" that could directly affect school sector workers. The legislation also threatens to force amalgamations which may directly impact decisions by workers to continue to be represented by their existing unions. CUPE may very well be challenged to campaign strongly if we want to continue to represent the more than 5,000 school sector workers we currently represent.

Ongoing Austerity

Across unions in Manitoba, there are major challenges in stopping the provincial government's attempts to leave workers behind. Resisting concessionary demands while fighting for real wage earning is a daily battle that CUPE members face. CUPE in Manitoba has been taking on these challenges with the support of the national bargaining policy to resist concessions and two-tier agreements. This has meant having workers in some cases locked out by their employers, with many others forced to take job action where necessary. In Manitoba School Divisions, where teachers have been achieving modest monetary gains in settlements through negotiated arbitration, the government has again attacked CUPE members directly by denying similar gains to support workers through the government directed settlement mandate to School Divisions. CUPE faced this challenge head-on through coordinated strategic bargaining and planning which included a solidarity pact designed to resist the government wage mandate for inferior compensation.

In crown corporations and in government funded and directed organizations, CUPE members faced the mandate for austere wage increases of 0%, 0%, .75% and 1% over four years, which is affecting our members in every region of the province. This mandate has also had an impact upon municipal bargaining and all other sectors. Taking on these challenges has required locals to allocate resources and time to resisting concessions.

CUPE Manitoba

During the last year, CUPE Manitoba was placed under administration to deal with problems of how the division itself was being administered. This provided an opportunity to examine the democratic processes and procedures of the division and to conduct a

comprehensive review of the operations of our division. Through this process, the opportunity was created to address certain concerns that had been identified, including instances of gender-based harassment and problems that undermined safe and inclusive spaces for all union members. Addressing these problems and ensuring that necessary and meaningful changes take place will continue to be the ongoing work of the Division, CUPE staff and the membership of CUPE in Manitoba.

Looking Ahead

In the coming two years, we recognize that taking on our internal challenges will allow us to take on the external

challenges that confront CUPE members in their workplaces and in the province, now more than ever. In the next two years, the work of CUPE members and staff will be to put our spirit of collective solidarity to work for the changes needed, for workers. It is that same spirit that will allow us to inspire everyday Manitobans to join the fight for a more inclusive and fair society, for political change and for the strengthening of the labour movement here in Manitoba.

SASKATCHEWAN

Debra Grimaldi, Regional Director
Ann Iwanchuk, A/Regional Director

In Saskatchewan, CUPE represents 31,669 members in a total of 146 bargaining units. We have one provincial local for our health care members, CUPE 5430, with approximately 13,800 members and covering five bargaining units in one health region.

Since our last national convention, our members have had to face a new enemy: COVID-19. We experienced temporary and permanent layoffs, primarily in the post-secondary and municipal sectors. Personal protective equipment became an everyday word and our heroes, our front-line workers, have looked the pandemic in the eye, and have worked tirelessly to provide the services on which our citizens rely on a daily basis.

Health care workers continue to face shortages of trained staff with lack of backfill protocols, service slowdowns, service resumptons, redeployment, set-up of cohort, labour pools, outbreaks, and exposure to infection. Although our leadership have participated in daily briefings with the Saskatchewan Health Authority, these issues have not been properly addressed.

Our K-12 schools have not had the same restrictions as some other provinces, with the majority of learning continuing in at least a partial in-classroom setting. Our members have provided the necessary cleaning and student supports, while proactively raising concerns about classroom sizes, and lack of social distancing. The provincial government finally recognized educators and support staff as a priority for vaccination, despite the age requirements.

Our municipal sector is facing deficits due to revenue losses as a result of being forced to reduce services during the pandemic. Many of our members were laid off and a number of seasonal workers were not recalled in 2020 and are only starting to be recalled in 2021.

Both the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina have been closed to the public since April 2020 and are considering reopening in the fall of 2021. Most classes are being offered remotely, and our sessional lecturers and teaching assistants have had to adapt to this new way of teaching. The greatest number of members impacted by layoffs comes from the university sector.

Many members in the community-based organization (CBO) sector were deemed essential. They had to fight to receive the appropriate PPE, and in many cases, they did not receive the necessary training to properly use it. This sector continues to face workload issues which have been

exacerbated by the requirement of cohorting which has caused many of our members to be forced to work in only one location.

Public health orders resulted in the shuttering of public libraries in the spring of 2020. This resulted in many temporary layoffs and a shift toward curbside pick-up in our larger library systems, along with a greater use of online programming.

The Saskatchewan Party government was slow to realize the threat posed by COVID-19 in early March 2020. Premier Moe dropped several hints that he was about to call a snap provincial election immediately following the tabling of the budget. An election was not ruled out until the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. The government then tabled a provincial budget without any revenue estimates, given the uncertain impact COVID-19 would have on the economy and the crash in world oil prices.

Like other provincial governments, the Saskatchewan Party government eventually declared a state of emergency and implemented strict public health measures. However, our provincial government was the first to unveil a re-opening plan. It has consistently prioritized the economy over public health.

Eventually, a full budget with revenue projections was released on June 15, 2020. The 2020-21 provincial budget forecasted a record deficit of \$2.4 billion. The Moe government's response to COVID-19 was primarily focused on increasing capital spending to revive the economy. The federal government covered over three-quarters of the costs of pandemic-related social and health supports. For example, the federal government paid \$53 million of the costs of the \$56 million Saskatchewan Temporary Wage Supplement Program to top up the pay of some essential workers.

Due to the delayed provincial election, the fall of 2020 provided us with a busy election season. The provincial election and the municipal and school board elections were held within weeks of each other. Provincially, we did not get the results we were hoping for, and the Saskatchewan Party remains in government with a sizeable caucus of 48 out of 61 seats. The remaining seats are held by the NDP. Despite the bleak results, we were successful in electing two CUPE members to the legislature: Meara Conway, CUPE 1949 and Vicki Mowat, CUPE 3287.

We yielded much better results in the municipal election with progressive candidates being elected across the province. Regina has elected the most progressive council in its history, including our former researcher, Cheryl Stadnichuk. We elected five CUPE members across the province: Kelli Hawtin CUPE 5430 – City Council, North Battleford; Charlene Miller, CUPE 5430 – City Council, Prince Albert; Terra Lennox-Zepp, CUPE 1949 – City Council, North Battleford; Lynn McCormick, CUPE 4254 – Councillor, Village of Marcelin; and Grace Wudrick, retired, CUPE 4254 – Trustee, Prairie Spirit School Division. We also elected National Representative Tony Head as City Councillor, Prince Albert.

Like other provinces, Saskatchewan experienced an intense second wave of COVID-19 starting in December of 2020. This wave caused many deaths in long-term care, contrary to the first wave. Most of these tragic deaths occurred in private long-term care facilities, in particular Parkside Extendicare in Regina. Once again, the Saskatchewan Party government was slow to follow the advice of doctors and public health experts with stricter public health measures. Despite the emergence of new COVID-19 variants in March, the Moe government loosened restrictions which contributed to a peak case in the third wave. Hospitalizations of younger people grew more common and Regina's ICU had to double-bunk patients.

The provincial budget for 2021-22, released on April 6, 2021, announced a new record deficit of \$2.6 billion. Thankfully, the Saskatchewan Party government chose to stretch out its deficit reduction plan so that it now plans to balance the budget by 2026-27, instead of 2024-25, which Finance Minister Donna Harpauer warned last fall would have required a series of austerity budgets. While our university sector received some much-needed funding increases after years of cuts and frozen budgets, funding to public libraries was frozen and there was only a meagre 1.1% increase to school divisions, which will be outstripped by the costs of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation collective agreement.

In May 2021, the Saskatchewan Party government was again the first province to announce a re-opening plan based on vaccination rates. This plan was announced on the same day that Alberta announced strict lockdown measures to curb skyrocketing infections. Many in the medical community are concerned the three-step plan could set the stage for a fourth wave since it does not tie the loosening of restrictions to infection rates or hospitalizations.

The year of 2020 saw the settlement of several protracted bargaining disputes including:

- CUPE 47 (City of Saskatoon water and wastewater workers)
- CUPE 600 (Government of Saskatchewan)
- CUPE 1871 (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission)
- CUPE 650 (Regina Public School Division maintenance workers)
- CUPE 3766 (Regina Public School Division Education Assistants, Administrative Assistants and other support staff)

CUPE Locals 600, 650 and 3766 received strike mandates from their respective memberships and held strike averting campaigns but they were able to achieve settlements at the bargaining table without taking job action.

There were 42 CUPE settlements in Saskatchewan in 2020. Altogether, these settlements covered 6,953 CUPE members (about 22% of CUPE members in Saskatchewan).

While a number of locals have negotiated roll-over agreements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many continue to conduct negotiations. A number of Memorandums of Agreement have been negotiated throughout the province to address temporary layoffs and safety protocols due to the pandemic.

There have been 20 CUPE settlements in Saskatchewan in 2021 to date. Altogether, these settlements covered 1,500 CUPE members (5% of CUPE members in Saskatchewan).

In November of 2020, we opened a new office in Yorkton. This office is staffed by two national representatives and one secretary and covers 14 bargaining units.

The CUPE Saskatchewan executive quickly adapted to working differently during the pandemic and successfully implemented four cost shares in 2020, with two additional cost shares in 2021.

Working with CUPE Saskatchewan, elected leaders and staff participated in a Think Tank to help us focus on our goals for the upcoming year. Member engagement is crucial as we move forward educating our members about workers rights and fighting off the right-wing agenda in the province. A focus of the Think Tank was to provide media and lobbying training. It is crucial that CUPE's story is the narrative that is conveyed to the public by the media.

It is because of the dedication of our members and staff that we have had successes in the province. Our leadership, both elected and staff, always show up to the challenges, and always give us their best.

ALBERTA AND NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Lisa McPherson, Regional Director

Alberta and the north have 40,000 members and over 110 locals. The bulk of our members are in municipal (19K), K-12 (10K) and health care (7K), with smaller numbers in post-secondary, airlines, social services, libraries and one privately-owned casino.

At the last convention, Alberta's economy had been gradually recovering. Despite the struggles in the energy sector, Alberta led the provinces in economic growth in 2017 & 2018. The election of the United Conservative Party (UCP), a combination of Alberta's right and ultra-right parties, along with COVID-19 have devastated the province.

Premier Jason Kenney remained true to his platform and delivered massive tax cuts to corporations but failed on his promise of not cutting front line services to do it. He has slashed funding and services in health care, education, post-secondary, criminal justice, municipal funding and almost every other part of government. The UCP has even refused to fund public services when the federal government has offered funding to do so. UCP cuts resulted in hundreds of education jobs lost and Kenney is cutting or privatizing thousands more in health care.

While promoting benefits for the wealthiest, Kenney lowered the minimum wage for students and those with disabilities and has removed protections under WCB, OHS, and social services. Disability services programs are seeing budget forecasting decreases on top of de-indexation and changes to payment schedules for some of the most vulnerable Albertans. Alberta is the only jurisdiction in Canada where farm workers have no minimum wage at all.

Jason Kenney did make good on promises for a "summer of repeal" on progressive labour laws the NDP had brought in and has gone even further with anti-union, anti-labour legislation. Labour in Alberta has now spent much of the past year and will spend more time in the upcoming years, fighting antiquated, repressive legislation that is worse than the previous 44 years of conservative government before Rachel Notley's NDP government.

When COVID hit the world, responsible governments got busy making workplaces safe, bumping up their health care systems and working out rules for businesses to operate. The Kenney government took the road of Donald Trump and other right-wing demagogues. Kenney provoked fights with doctors, teachers, and health care workers while other provinces named those workers heroes. Each time COVID infection numbers increased exponentially, Albertans were left waiting until the numbers were out of control before the UCP government

acted to impose lockdown rules. Eighteen UCP MLAs have signed a public letter decrying health orders and restrictions with no consequences. Some MLAs have even expressed hesitancy about vaccinations. It is no wonder Alberta's compliance is low and case numbers surged higher than anywhere else in North America.

Numerous public sector bargaining groups in Alberta are in bargaining this year. Most have accepted wage freezes for several years. Kenney's rollback mandates, secret directives, and privatization and cuts to health care, K-12 education, social services, and post-secondary jobs and programs in the middle of a pandemic and economic adversity are both alarming and appalling. "Jobs, pipelines, and the economy" have not emerged.

These accelerated attacks on all unions peaked in 2020 with the ramming through of Kenney's most insidious bill yet. Bill 32's central goal is to radically transform labour relations, undermine the Canadian consensus, and pave the way for anti-union "right-to-work" legislation. It is an unprecedented attack on union finances, disrupts the way we represent our members' interests, and negatively affects the way that unions can support their communities.

CUPE Alberta conducted the largest campaign in our history in 2020 with a half million-dollar effort to educate the public about the impact of Jason Kenney's government. We are keeping up the pressure in 2021 and expect to produce even better results as vaccinations increase and we are able to conduct in person actions and activities.

For all the bungling and bad decisions of the Kenney government, there is good news and cause for hope. We are seeing signs that Albertans understand how bad the UCP is and are ready to change government. Opinion polls and fundraising totals put Rachel Notley back in the lead, and the UCP are fighting internally. Our challenge is to keep up the pressure on the UCP over the next two years and make sure Albertans remember why they are mad at the UCP. Fortunately, there is a lot of reasons we can use to remind them of that.

Post-Secondary

A province that wants to diversify its economy needs an educated population. There are few cuts more foolish and damaging to Alberta's long-term economy than Kenney's reckless gutting of our universities and trade schools. In fact, no area has seen as much cutting as post-secondary in the province.

Municipal

Changes to how the UCP fund municipalities as well as COVID have wreaked havoc on municipal budgets resulting in many CUPE members being laid off, primarily in recreation but also in municipally-funded libraries and elsewhere. Employers have tabled proposals of wage rollbacks and two-tier contracts, or threats of layoffs if zero per cent wage increases are not accepted.

CUPE locals must engage in municipal elections in the fall of 2021 and ensure we elect councils that will fight the UCP agenda and remain friendly to public services. As you read this at convention, we will know how successful those strategies were in the October elections.

Health Care

Health care has been plagued by UCP ineptitude. In the middle of a pandemic, the UCP continues its plans to privatize 15,000 support staff in acute care across the province. Alberta's single site staffing rules have been insufficient to prevent the spread of COVID and protect workers because of the many loopholes' employers used to avoid raising hours, wages and standards to keep employees to one site. Recent changes to the rules to deal with variant strains of COVID came far too late.

Pandemic pay of \$2/hour was promised by the Kenney government to health care aides in the long-term care sector, however, poor planning, disorganization and disrespect to other classifications riddled this program with problems and delays. Alberta was the last province to access federal monies from Ottawa intended for front-line workers. The rollout was confusing, contentious, divisive and without clear direction, resulting in inconsistent qualification rules and many workers missing out.

Education

At a time when schools need more cleaners, more EAs, more teachers and more everything – the Kenney government reduced staff by 1,800. The school system is expecting 20,000 additional students next September without a dime of additional funding. It is only due to some funding from the federal government that layoffs in the K-12 sector have not been worse.

The provincial government stopped contact tracing for cases that originate in schools, so proper statistics on COVID-19 in this sector may never be known.

Libraries

There have been fewer layoffs than other sectors because of continuation of curbside pickups, online educationals and programs and reopening although with restricted hours. Having said that, the numbers of layoffs have varied greatly between libraries and we are seeing some severances due to funding cuts for municipal libraries.

Social Services

This sector will see the negative effects of Bill 32 firsthand. Reductions in charitable contributions and funding reductions due to COVID, Bill 32, and government budget cuts are negatively affecting, and will continue to affect, several of our locals in this sector.

Privatization/Contracting Out

The Kenney government is moving ahead with privatization of laboratory services, general support services in health care and "choice" in education by increasing public funding of private schools while reducing public school funding.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Meena Brisard, Regional Director

Rob Jandric, Assistant Director

Zoe Magnus, Assistant Director

CUPE has faced unprecedented challenges in B.C. Once the pandemic was declared, CUPE locals and staff were forced to pivot midstride and face COVID-19's many challenges. At the height of the lockdown, approximately 20,000 CUPE members in B.C. were laid-off and temporarily out of work. As elsewhere in Canada, these lay-offs disproportionately affected members from equity-seeking groups, young and new workers, and members in traditionally low-paying, low-security positions. This reminded us that we must work both harder and smarter to protect all workers covered by our collective agreements while bringing up the floor for all workers.

Provincial Overview

CUPE members and working families in B.C. continue to enjoy the benefits of having a progressive government in Victoria. Our members have been protected during the pandemic by a government that puts workplace safety ahead of cost-cutting austerity. These protections have been achieved mostly because of the spirit of consultation that has allowed us to work in coalition with the BC NDP government to make the kind of changes that have the greatest positive impact on our members and their workplaces.

In spring 2019, the government announced a major overhaul of the BC *Labour Code and Employment Standards Act* (ESA). The new code features improvements around organizing and unfair practices; it also lengthens the freeze period for first contracts and improves successorship rights in situations of contract flipping. ESA changes include increases to minimum wage, an expansion of minimum standards to all workers in B.C., the removal of education as an essential service, and a rise in the minimum working age from 12 to 16 years. Our legal team assisted CUPE BC in advocating strongly for these changes and are now working with national representatives across the province, during bargaining, to ensure that collective agreements meet or exceed the new ESA standards.

Also, pre-pandemic, we took part in the government's comprehensive review of the K-12 funding formula. This included consultations with all 60 school districts and more than 350 education stakeholders. As a result of this review, we are now seeing the first changes to the B.C. funding model since 2002. Meanwhile, CUPE has launched a comprehensive campaign for better access to child care through a seamless day model delivered through the K-12 system: in consultation with our locals, we are working with government and school districts to make child care

universally available in the most effective and efficient way possible. Through all these changes—along with other moves such as restoring the BC Human Rights Commission and passing legislation to enshrine the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into provincial law—the Horgan government continues to seek consultation with regular British Columbians and stakeholder organizations such as CUPE.

Protecting Public Services

Standing up to employers who kept public services closed for cost-saving reasons during the pandemic became crucial. Our public awareness campaigns put pressure on local and provincial governments to keep our public services available and reopen them safely. Meanwhile, CUPE's efforts during local government elections and by-elections mostly quelled the push for lower taxes and contracted-out services driven by conservative groups. In 2019, we celebrated a major victory in Maple Ridge, where City Council voted unanimously for public workers to deliver programs and services for the soon-to-be-opened Albion Community Centre; on the South Island, we helped CUPE 1978 lead a successful fightback campaign after the West Shore Parks and Recreation Society (WSPR) sought expressions of interest for the private operation of the Q Centre Sports Complex. In Vancouver, we educated city councillors about the perils of Social Impact Bonds, an insidious form of public-private partnership that targets our community's most vulnerable people. Our largest project during the pandemic has been our work against mass privatization of the child care sector. With new provincial funding being made available to school districts, municipalities, and other government bodies for child care spaces in B.C., we are campaigning hard to ensure that these services are publicly-delivered.

Collective Bargaining

Since the BC NDP government first took power in 2017, we have seen real gains for our members in provincial sector bargaining. The government set the tone with a wage mandate that did not start with concessions. They agreed in principle to provide wage, benefit, and low-wage redress for provincially funded sectors. This allowed employers to actually negotiate and work through known issues. Shifting from adversarial relationships with government to relationships based on mutual respect became an added bonus, knowing that 2019 would test our capacity with approximately 70,000 of our members either at the table or going into bargaining.

We opened and concluded bargaining in the K-12 sector for all 57 CUPE locals representing 28,000 members. In preparation for 2021 bargaining, we were able to add an additional staff coordinator for the sector. In municipalities and libraries, we are beginning to see the positive outcomes of our regional pre-bargaining campaigns in 2018, 2019 and 2020. Across the Thompson-Okanagan, we successfully negotiated wage increases in several settlements in the 2 to 2.5 per cent range. This firmly established 2 per cent as the minimum our members will accept, a standard that has been applied provincewide and upheld through mediations: municipal locals who have returned to the table have mainly opted to accept two-year, roll-over agreements with modest 2 per cent wage increases each year.

With only a handful of agreements settled pre-pandemic, our post-secondary education locals also had a busy 2020. Our university and college locals were first out of the gate to negotiate collective agreements using online platforms, and they gained much-needed language and wage improvements for their members. While doing the hard work as trailblazers for our new bargaining model, these locals were also hit hard by the lockdown of on-campus learning, the dramatic reduction in international students, and the closure of almost all ancillary services on campus. In community social services and community health, the majority of bargaining was completed in 2018 resulting in overall wage increases of 2 per cent with an additional \$20 million in low-wage redress. At the beginning of the pandemic, we secured additional pandemic pay at \$4 an hour for 16 weeks to recognize the essential status of these workers.

In 2018 and 2019, the Emergency Dispatchers unit of CUPE 873 challenged their no-right-to-strike status by demanding access to the interest arbitration process to settle their collective bargaining, which had stalled at the table. Because of this bold challenge to the status quo, they made significant gains for the members, who had long lagged behind their equivalents across the country. In September 2020, these workers left CUPE 873 to form their own standalone CUPE local, the Emergency Communications Professionals of BC, CUPE 8911. Meanwhile our ambulance paramedics in CUPE 873, despite the challenges of an ongoing opioid crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, persevered heroically as they faced a “triple threat” of staff shortages due to recruitment issues and more stress leaves.

Organizing

Since the beginning of 2020, we have welcomed 656 new members in new certifications—growth that followed our membership numbers breaking the 100,000-mark pre-pandemic. This is largely due to important investments in organizing through 2019 and 2020, with the addition of a half-time organizer—tasked with negotiating first collective agreements—and the training of more than 15 new member organizers. For most of 2020 we focussed on bringing in excluded workers from our municipal sectors, including fitness professionals, cultural workers and animal control and shelter workers. From the addition of new units, organic growth, and a commitment to wall-to-wall organizing, we arrived in 2021 well prepared to take on the challenge of organizing in the child care sector through K-12. We continue to grow in our traditional sectors of municipalities, libraries and post-secondary education. This past spring, we brought 50 workers from the Prince George Public Library into CUPE 4951, up to that time the biggest library system in B.C. yet to be organized.

Toward the Future

In 2019, CUPE National funded two new permanent positions: Assistant Regional Director at the B.C. Regional Office; and a National Representative for the North Island based in the Comox Area Office. For National staff, this has been a very difficult year. Their dedication and commitment have been inspiring; they showed true grit and resilience in serving our members while facing their own challenges adapting to pandemic working conditions. To all staff, we offer our sincere gratitude.

We look forward to work with the president and the secretary-treasurer as CUPE continues to grow in B.C.