

Our members have the know-how

One of the great things about our union is the variety of skills and knowledge that our 80,000 members bring to the table. With more than 170 locals throughout the province, CUPE represents workers in colleges, community social services, health, K-12, libraries, municipalities, transportation, and universities. That's a lot of expertise.

Although many of our job classifications involve fairly visible work, much of the general public never gets to witness or appreciate the full range of skills that CUPE members have to offer. The same goes for CUPE members themselves: a lot of us go through our work lives having no idea what members from other sectors can teach us about really useful things: practical things that would be useful at home, like gardening or renovation, or having the answers to complicated technical issues we've always wondered about.

And that got me thinking: what if we were to find a way to help CUPE members share their expertise among each other and the public? Thanks to the wonders of the Internet and low-cost video, we've found a great way to do it. Beginning this month, we're offering CUPE members space on our website to demonstrate a particular skill that's part of their job. Just send us a completed video of yourself, onscreen, showing us your know-how. We'd love to hear from you, no matter what you do. Whether you're a bylaw enforcement officer, fitness instructor, nutritionist, crisis intervention worker, conservationist, carpenter, water worker, electrician, paramedic, sewage treatment worker, sanitation engineer, plumber, pool lifeguard, library worker, custodian, transit worker, flight attendant, travel agent, environmental officer, or a host of other job descriptions—you've all gained skills and insight from your work that are worth sharing with the world.

Your video should be no longer than three minutes, and you should begin by telling us your name, your CUPE local, and your job description. Once we've confirmed your CUPE membership—and provided that your video meets all the usual standards of brevity and good taste—we'll post it on the CUPE BC website and then archive it under "Member videos."

To get the ball rolling, and give you an idea of what we're looking for, we've initiated a three-part pilot project starring Colin Pawson of CUPE 1091, Valarie Nickel of CUPE 873-02 and Tracy Weldon of CUPE 23. Brother Pawson, head gardener for Delta schools, takes you through a few useful lawn and gardening maintenance tips to get you ready for the summer. Sister Nickel, who before joining CUPE regional staff was an emergency dispatcher, shows you how to teach a child to call 911 in the event of an emergency. And Sister Weldon, along with co-worker Melissa, both municipal workers

for the City of Burnaby, shot their segment from Burnaby's Environmental Centre of Excellence to demonstrate the finer points of backyard composting.

Have a look at [these videos](#), which we've just posted on the site. I hope you find them useful, and that they might even inspire you to produce one of your own.

This theme for this year's CUPE BC convention (April 21-24) is "Our Members – Our Strength." I can't think of a better way to demonstrate this theme than to show off our members and what they can teach us.

Barry O'Neill is president of CUPE BC.