

## **CUPE BC Executive Board**

### **Report to Convention – April 2018**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

At each annual convention CUPE BC's Executive Board reports to our members. Part of this report covers our work in delivering on the commitments made at last year's Convention described in the Action Plan. At the same time, it identifies the issues that we believe our members will face in the coming year, and the challenges we need to be prepared for.

CUPE BC is the largest union in BC with over 87,000 members. It is our priority to support our affiliated locals and district councils and that work is as diverse and exciting as our membership. Further our goals for the year are set out in the Action Plan which is developed from the commitments made each year at convention.

Much of the work we have done in the past year has been to work with our new NDP Government in British Columbia. For the first time in 16 years we have a government in BC that is actively working for the people of the province. The new NDP government has actively been working to consult with the people of BC on the issues that matter most to them and we have been active on your behalf by writing submissions to government, presenting at committees and meeting with ministers and staff.

Aside from welcoming a new government for the people we have had a very busy year with many monumental events that have made 2017/2018 a banner year for CUPE in BC. We have fought back against unscrupulous employers that would erode the rights of workers in the province on the picket line, in the media, on the streets and in our locals. We continue to be accessible to our members and the public at community events across the province and we continue to advocate for the collectively bargained rights of workers and the rights of workers generally.

In February we moved to our new office facility. This new, 45,000 square foot building we share with CUPE National will have the latest technology, a training centre, increased accessibility for meeting spaces for our locals, and is situated in Burnaby in very close proximity to SkyTrain access. Aside from being a new, purpose-built facility, this building is owned by CUPE National and is a legacy for future generations of CUPE members.

We have faced many challenges over the past year, some local to our union, like the campaign to democratically change the board at Pacific Blue Cross and others, like Unifor leaving the CLC have been part of our role in the broader labour movement. We continue to stand up for our members in the house of labour and fight back against those unions who would conduct raiding activities instead of working to organize the unorganized workers of this province.

This year we will continue our work in political action by supporting progressive candidates in Municipal and School Board Elections this October. Changes to election financing law in British Columbia means that we will have to change the way in which we engage with our members and support candidates. With the election of the NDP, we will face stiff opposition across this country as the right pushes back against our political gains.

We are well prepared to meet the challenges and the joys of the upcoming year, supporting our members, fighting for worker rights and working with our NDP government on the issues important to our members.

## **BARGAINING**

CUPE BC operates in a support capacity for bargaining across the province. Wherever needed CUPE BC and the Executive Board are present, applying political pressure, engaging allies and generally supporting local executives and bargaining committees. We also work with our allies in the labour movement in places where

there are multi-union or provincial bargaining tables to ensure that CUPE members are getting the deal that they need.

Over the past year, through our work alongside National Servicing Representatives, we have helped to bring about agreements that are favourable to our membership and continue to fight concessions to our agreements that would roll back worker's rights and compensation.

We would like to thank all the members who have taken the time and energy to work on their bargaining committees across the province. Without our members, dedicated to building fairer collective agreements and pushing back against employer concessions we would not have the success we have as a union.

### **POLITICAL ACTION**

Political action work has been identified as a priority by successive conventions and we continue to work hard on this front to bring forward governments at all levels that have the interests of our members and workers at heart. This year we will have to work hard to support candidates in local school board and municipal elections.

Our first priority will be increasing voter turnout of CUPE members voting in municipal and school board elections. We will be contacting members by mail, email, phone, social media, and on the doorstep to motivate votes for progressive candidates.

Our second priority will be working with Locals to recruit, train, and support members political action activities. From developing report cards on incumbents we have endorsed to working on electoral campaigns, we will be developing and training members on the specific skills needed to elect our bosses across the province.

CUPE BC will host a Union Women Political Leadership course for CUPE sisters across BC. The course will offer training on community and political organizing strategy, public speaking, media relations skills, and more, benefitting both the members as well as their Locals. From working on issue campaigns, to strengthening CUPE Locals, to engaging in electoral politics, the course help provide confidence and knowledge to CUPE sisters wanting to play a leadership role in the Labour movement and the broader community.

In the past we have made significant gains in electing progressive people across the province and we will be capitalizing on the lessons learned and our successes to continue electing progressive candidates.

In addition to the work we will be doing on local elections, we will also be launching a new member to member campaign and member education around the issues of Electoral Reform in support of our political action campaign around the referendum on changing our electoral process in British Columbia. Changing from a first-past-the-post system to one where every vote counts will make a huge difference in this province and will make our democratic processes more meaningful.

### **WORKING WITH OUR GOVERNMENT**

We called on CUPE members to support the NDP in the election and you answered. Without the support and activism of thousands of CUPE members across the province we could not have elected a provincial government that cares about worker rights and addressing the significant issues around poverty and homelessness in this province. We still have much work to do supporting the BC NDP as it navigates the challenges of working with the Green Party Caucus and the Confidence and Supply Agreement that sets out the terms of the Green Caucus's support of the NDP minority government.

Challenges aside, after 16 years of neglect we now have a government that is working for the people and with the people. It will take time to heal the abuses the

previous Liberal government inflicted on the vital programs and services of this province, but we are finally turning in the right direction.

Following our success in the provincial election, we have a whole new relationship with the provincial government. We have markedly increased the number and regularity of meetings with ministers and government officials. Among many meetings with government, we have met with the ministers of Education; Advanced Education, Skills and Training; Municipal Affairs and Housing; Children and Family Development; Finance; and the Parliamentary Secretary for Childcare to discuss issues important to our Union. We have also met with all the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from the Green Party Caucus and continue to keep in contact with them in recognition of the importance of the Confidence and Supply Agreement in this new government.

The NDP government is fulfilling its election promises to listen to the concerns and expertise of the people of the province in a way that is unprecedented, and CUPE BC has been working hard to ensure that the most significant concerns of our members and workers in BC are being brought to the attention of the new government. We have prepared submissions on a broad cross-section of issues and we have also spent time building relationships with the Cabinet Ministers and their Ministry staff.

In the fall of 2017 we prepared a pre-Budget submission to the provincial government's Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. In the submission we focussed on issues around tax fairness including ending the regressive MSP tax, only investing in publicly funded, publicly owned and publicly operated infrastructure, properly funding public services, making changes to WorkSafeBC and the Labour Relations Code, review and amend the funding formula for K-12 education and a request to review the revenue generation sources for municipalities.

Later in the fall we prepared and presented two further submissions to government. The first submission on Minimum Wage focussed on the need to bring the minimum wage to \$15 now. We outlined many of the issues facing the working poor in the Province and brought attention to the dire need to get to \$15 (or more) as soon as possible. The second submission was to a special government committee looking into reinstating the BC Human Rights Commission. We focussed this submission on the creation of a Human Rights Commission that would act as an education and advocacy hub in the province alongside the existing tribunal system.

So far in 2018 we have prepared, submitted and in most cases presented to government on 7 areas of interest to CUPE members. We have represented CUPE BC and our members on the issues of Electoral Reform, the K-12 Funding Formula, replacing the Medical Services Premium Tax, the Freedom of Information and Personal Privacy Act, Sexual Violence on Post Secondary Campuses, the Poverty Reduction Plan, and the Labour Code Review.

We expect to continue to make submissions on behalf of our members throughout the next year.

## **DEFENDING PUBLIC SERVICES**

It is in this context that we continue to resist the privatization of public services at both the provincial and local levels. The Strong Communities Working Group (SCWG) provides us with an effective avenue to bring together CUPE BC officers and staff from across our sectors to oppose public private partnerships (P3s), Alternative Service Delivery (ASD), Core Service Reviews and cloaked privatization initiatives such as “shared services” arrangements.

The Strong Communities Working Group is a committee of National staff and CUPE BC elected officials, created 17 years ago to support the political and strategic work of the Division. The group meets weekly and is tasked with monitoring emerging issues and carrying out campaigns to support our members across British

Columbia. They also help to implement decisions made by delegates at our conventions, including the Action Plan. Their energy and commitment is imperative to our success defending public services and supporting locals.

Currently, the SCWG is comprised of:

- Paul Faoro (CUPE BC President)
- Trevor Davies (CUPE BC Secretary Treasurer)
- Cindy McQueen (CUPE BC GVP)
- Karen Ranalletta (CUPE BC GVP)
- Tanya Patterson (CUPE BC GVP)
- Michelle Waite (CUPE BC GVP)
- Meena Brisard (Regional Director)
- Rob Jandric (Assistant Regional Director)
- Nathan Allen (Local Election Coordinator)
- Greg Burkitt (Education)
- Jordana Feist (Research)
- David Fleming (Organizing)
- Robert Gilchrist (Anti-Privatization Coordinator)
- Ryan Groundwater (Local Government Liaison)
- Corrine Iwata (Administrative Support)
- Tina Meadows (Local Community Organizer)
- Sharon Prescott (Director of Operations, CUPE BC)
- Justin Schmid (Legislative Coordinator)
- Clay Suddaby (Communications)

Despite significant challenges we continue to work with locals in their communities to resist privatization. In addition to our support of fight back campaigns in 2017 we are carrying on with a proactive campaign wherein locals could apply to CUPE BC for support and funding for contracting in campaigns. CUPE BC is still accepting applications to the “Bringing our Work In-House” campaign for this year.

The City of White Rock issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for solid waste collection early in 2015. We have been working closely with community members and CUPE Local 402-02 has an ongoing campaign to keep these services in-house. Through community coalition work we have managed to keep solid waste

in-house in White Rock. Despite this small step forward, 2017 saw a number of new and ongoing threats that will keep us busy in 2018.

Building on our successful experience in Prince George, CUPE BC, working with national staff and locals, will continue our campaign surrounding the core services reviews taking place across the province. We will take every opportunity to work with locals to fight back against these “one-size fits all” reviews whose main aim always appear to be to find “efficiencies” by reducing the quality of services our members provide, reducing their compensation, or eliminating their jobs.

Similarly, we will support efforts to monitor and campaign against privatization threats emerging from shared services initiatives in the K-12 and post-secondary education sectors.

One of the largest fights for fairness that CUPE BC and the Strong Communities working group have ever undertaken was the democratic election of a slate of progressive board members to the Pacific Blue Cross board of directors. This was due to the Employer’s lockout of the CUPE Local 1816 members for 66 days. The CUPE-led campaign, supported by the BC Federation of Labour and affiliates—including the Hospital Employees’ Union, MoveUP, Unifor, and the BC Teachers Federation—created enough momentum to put nearly 800 primary plan holders on buses and get them out to the Westin Bayshore to cast their votes for change.

### **Working with Allies and Supporting Other Struggles**

Working with our allies and supporting other struggles is one of the most important roles we all have in the labour movement. It is, after all, what makes us a movement, and allows us to fight for those things that not only improve the broader bargaining context for all unionized workers, but that improve working conditions for all workers, and the communities we work in.

There are many organizations that share our values with whom we work regularly or join forces with in issue-oriented coalitions. Such organizations share our concerns around fair and safe work, environmental protection and climate change, the value

of public services, addressing poverty and inequality, and justice for migrants, Indigenous and racialized people.

We are active participants in Pride parades and celebrations across the province. Many locals stepped up to provide significant support for these festive and important events last year. These have been excellent forums for us to show our support for our LGBTQ2+ workers, and to bring together CUPE members in celebration of diversity. Similarly, CUPE BC's participation in Surrey's annual Vaisakhi Parade, an event with more than 250,000 participants, provides a festive way to connect with community partners and celebrate diversity.

In September, CUPE members from throughout the Lower Mainland and beyond participated in the Walk for Reconciliation in Vancouver. This was a positive move to build better relationships among Indigenous peoples and all Canadians. The act of walking and sharing our stories joins us in a commitment to create a new way forward for reconciliation.

We also support community groups aimed at making life better in a variety of ways for a wide range of British Columbians. We are active members of the Living Wage for Families advisory committee, we support the \$10 A Day Child Care Campaign, and Union Protein, a community partnership to address the shortages of protein at BC's food banks.

While it is impossible to name all the allies and community groups with whom we work with throughout the year, it is worth highlighting some of our enduring working relationships. We work closely with the Columbia Institute and support the work they do with progressive School Trustees and Municipal Mayors, Councillors and Directors.

We continue to support the work of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) in their efforts to debunk methodologically flawed research from right-wing think tanks that continually attempt to vilify unions, unionized workers and the public sector. We are currently working with the BC Federation of Labour, and other affiliates, to provide additional funding to the CCPA for a research position

dedicated precisely to this work. For the past few years this position has conducted in-depth public finance analysis and work on fair taxation. Our General Vice President Karen Ranalletta is a member of their Public Finance Advisory Council.

We support the vital work that Pivot Legal Society does in pursuing legal reform with the aim of challenging law and policy that intensifies poverty and social exclusion.

We also support the incredible work of Megaphone Magazine, an organization focused on highlighting the impacts of living with poverty in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Megaphone has more than 40 vendors, many of whom are struggling with a variety of barriers—homelessness, addiction or a mental illness. Selling the paper gives the vendor a voice in their community and helps raise their self-esteem.

We also support the more focused struggles of groups such as the BC Health Coalition to protect and expand public healthcare, and CoDevelopment Canada in their solidarity and partnership work in Latin America. Through the Colleen Jordan fund, we continue to support international solidarity.

Another key piece of the partnership work we do is actively supporting other unions in their struggles and community outreach. We continue to work closely with the BC Federation of Labour, supporting many campaigns and projects including the \$15 minimum wage campaign, Women's Lobby, the skilled trades and apprenticeship working group, Day of Mourning and issues concerning the broader labour movement in BC. The CUPE BC President, Secretary-Treasurer, and Executive Board members spend a significant amount of time working on behalf of CUPE members by participating on the BC Federation of Labour Executive Council and on other committees, campaigns and working groups.

Sometimes the partners we work with are also our employers. Municipalities and school boards can share our values. Many municipalities have opposed free trade agreements and often share our concerns over investment and procurement provisions in these agreements. We make the same calls to other levels of government concerning funding for municipal infrastructure. Similarly, school

boards share our concerns over the chronic underfunding of public education, and we support them in speaking out against the downloading of funding cuts to the local level. Friendly local governments reflect in large part the work we do supporting and educating progressive candidates in local elections and supporting education and lobby efforts between elections.

Finally, we work with provincial groups that are outside the labour movement that share our concerns including the Union of BC Municipalities, the BC School Trustees Association and the BC Library Association. These groups can make powerful allies in the community and our continued good relationship with them means we can access their membership through conferences and other events.

## **COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS**

CUPE BC's committees are critical in reporting and advising the CUPE BC Executive Board around a variety of issues and concerns of our union and its members. We have 21 committees and 3 working groups. Over 250 members from across the province participate in our committees and working groups bringing a strong voice forward. Every two years these committees are reappointed with representation from across the province.

Our committees bring people together to work through issues that affect members and sectors across the province. By working together they often consolidate issues into concrete action items in the form of resolutions at Convention, as well as informing debate at Convention and on the Action Plan.

As the Precarious Workers Working Group nears the end of its mandate we are pleased to report that along with CUPE National research the working group has developed and distributed surveys on working conditions of precarious workers over the course of 2017. The data from this research will be compiled into a report providing recommendations to locals, CUPE BC and CUPE National on how each level of CUPE can act to make work less precarious for our members and the broader society. The report is expected to be ready for Convention 2019.

From the 2017 convention resolutions 3 new working groups were formed to complete work related to strike pay, CUPE BC's history and to unravel CUPE BC's Policies.

The strike pay working group was delayed and ultimately suspended as a result of increased workloads due to the Pacific Blue Cross lockout and the office move. The focus of this working group was to review the process and paper work required for locals to claim, and for the division to pay strike pay. This is a cumbersome process and could be improved to make the lives of local treasurers and the CUPE BC accounting staff during the stress of job action. There was no mandate for this group to look at the amount and timing of strike pay.

The History Project accomplished one of its major goals by reaching an agreement with the Simon Fraser University Library. Over 80 boxes of CUPE BC's historical materials will be housed in Special Collections and Rare Books. This contribution is the largest donation of labour history SFU has ever received and ensures that our history will be available for academic research which will help strengthen the new major program in SFU's Labour Studies Program. This was a critical action with the timing of the office move to ensure that we would not lose our historical records. The second goal that this working group is working on is to develop an updated history book for CUPE BC; this item remains a work in progress.

The Policy Working Group undertook one of the largest and most detailed project CUPE BC has ever done. Our current Policy manual has evolved over the years and has developed into a difficult document to administer and to understand, and is a challenge for locals and members to use as a working document on policy positions of CUPE BC. This working group has reviewed the entire existing policy manual and has prepared a modern, updated policy manual which is located in your convention binders to reference. The CUPE BC executive board has endorsed the work of this working group and has submitted a resolution to convention to update the current policy manual to the new policy manual.

Our committees are often involved in campaigns, around critical issues facing a local or a sector such as contracting out, understaffing or precarious work. They also play a crucial role in connecting our work and our members with the broader community.

## **CONFERENCES**

Conferences provide a forum for members to come together and share their experiences at the local level with the wider membership. They provide a dedicated space for members to have in-depth discussions about common struggles, to hear from speakers in the field, and to share useful information about successful and less successful strategies.

On June 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> CUPE BC will be hosting the All Presidents Bargaining and Educational Think Tank. This collaborative education conference will give Presidents across sectors and regions an opportunity to explore the new CUPE National and Regional Bargaining Policy as well as valuable insight and strategies around bargaining model language for OH&S, violence in the workplace and precarious work. There will also be a legal review of essential services and replacement workers, a how to on accessing the defence fund and cost shares and a briefing on best practises about local union operations during a strike.

In 2019 we will be the host province for the Western Municipal conference and preliminary planning has already begun and we are excited to showcase the dynamic work of our locals and division to municipal workers from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

## **WORKING WITH OUR NATIONAL UNION**

We work closely with the National Union and we are proud of the great working relationship we have with National Staff. They support us at every level, from walking the picket lines with striking locals to lobbying at the federal level for worker's rights. We would like to acknowledge the invaluable work of the people CUPE National employs to work on behalf of the members in British Columbia.

In January of 2018, Robin Jones announced his retirement. We thank Robin for his service to CUPE members as an activist, servicing representative and regional director and wish him a happy retirement. In March, Meena Brisard was appointed to the position of Regional Director and Rob Jandric was appointed to the position of Assistant Regional Director. Welcome aboard to both of you in your new positions.

Also thank-you to Meena Brisard for her exceptional work on the office relocation and her continued dedication to serving CUPE members. Further thanks goes to the CUPE staff representatives, specialist representatives and support staff share their experience and expertise daily with the members and CUPE BC. We thank the representatives for their commitment to our members and locals. They recognize that this is more than just work, it's part of a movement.

The National Union supports us in our own local campaigns and political action and by developing large national campaigns such as that around renewing the Health Accord that benefit our members and members across Canada.

CUPE BC members are represented on the National Executive Board by CUPE BC President, Paul Faoro who sits as a Regional Vice President of the National Union.

We also need to thank CUPE National, CUPE President Mark Hancock, and Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury for their support for the work we do here in British Columbia.

### **CUPE BC**

In August we lost former executive board member and activist Janet Bigelow from CUPE Local 1048 in Prince George. A powerful representative of City of Prince George employees and a defender of quality public services, a strong voice on the North Central Labour Council, and an important community activist, Janet's positive impact on her union and her community will be felt for many years to come.

In September we lost a key member of our Strong Communities Working Group, Jeff Lawson. Jeff began his activism in CUPE as a member of CUPE Local 1622 (SPCA employees), eventually becoming president of the local. He served on CUPE BC's Executive Board as a general vice president and served as a National Representative from 2008 until his passing. In his last posting, he served for many years as the Local Community Organizer for CUPE BC's Strong Communities Working Group.

CUPE members around the province have faced unprecedented challenges due to the 2017 wildfire season. CUPE BC established an emergency fund with an initial contribution of \$10,000. We encouraged CUPE Locals and District Councils throughout the province to contribute what they could, as well as Locals and Divisions across the country, so we could help offset the financial impact of these devastating fires on CUPE members in the affected areas. CUPE National also contributed to the fund.

## **OUR EMPLOYEES**

Finally, we say thank you to those who work directly for CUPE BC. It is their work that makes our work possible, and without whom we would be lost. Without Director of Operations, Sharon Prescott we would not be attending this convention today. Kristi Bounegru, Shirley Loftus, Wendy Monkhouse, Jolanta Osowska, Darci Schmid, and Lori Watt are all invaluable to the smooth running of our office and many events. This year we are saying goodbye to two long-time CUPE BC staff members. Shirley Loftus, who has been with us for 15 years, is retiring at the end of Convention. Thank you, Shirley for all your service and support to our union and our members. We also want to wish Director of Operations Sharon Prescott all the best as she has announced that she will be retiring at the end of the year, making this her final convention as lead organizer. Sharon has served as Executive Assistant to three CUPE BC Presidents and four Secretary-Treasurers, and has made an enormous and important contribution to CUPE BC. On behalf of the entire executive board, all the delegates here at convention, and all 87,000 members across the

province, thank you for your dedication, and best wishes on a well-deserved retirement.

Thank you all again to all our staff on behalf of the Officers, Executive Board and the delegates to this Convention.

April 2018