

CUPE BC Persons with Disabilities Committee

Report to Convention – April 2018

The CUPE BC One Big Committee meeting (OBCM) in October 2017, was the debut of the Persons with Disabilities Committee, it was formerly known as the Persons with Disabilities Working Group. The Committee spent the day at the OBCM brainstorming different ideas and formulating ways to become more effective at promoting the interests and aims of disabled workers to make our locals, workplaces, and communities more inclusive and removing long standing barriers.

Our pivotal role in improving workplace rights must include campaigns and activities aimed at supporting CUPE activists involved in the fight for equity and equality in the broader community, but for this mandate, the Committee has decided on a narrower focus aimed at achieving specific measurable outcomes and making a real improvement to the lives of our members.

While we will continue to raise awareness of disability issues and the rights of all workers to be treated with respect and dignity and participate in meaningful work, the committee has decided to look beyond accommodation issues only and create a modern action plan that boldly challenges us all as CUPE activists by acting on real barriers to participation by seeking to eliminate the same first in our own houses and then in concentric circles in our affiliated organizations and workplaces, and finally in the community at large.

At the OBCM, we submitted the following action plan:

1) CUPE BC: Accessible For All by 2020!

Assure that all meeting spaces and gatherings of our union, at every level, are accessible to all our members. To achieve this, we will develop an Audit Check-List to be sent to all locals in BC urging them to conduct the audit and identify areas that need improvement, then set a concrete actionable plan to correct the deficiencies, and provide information on grants and funding options for upgrading

building and offices. At this time the committee has prepared a letter to locals and is drafting sample questions for the checklist.

Further elements of our action plan include:

- 2) Community Partnerships: engaging community partners such as Disability Alliance BC, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, and BC Centre for Ability – in providing a day of training on their work both to our committee and at a future Equity night at the CUPE BC Convention. The committee in its last meeting had a guest speaker from Disabilities Alliance BC – Jane Dyson. She gave an overview of the organization and services provided. We are working to create a video on Persons with Disabilities barriers to employment with the support of their organization.
- 3) Encourage CUPE BC in developing a plan for supporting the emerging technological advances that improve the lives of persons with disabilities, such as tech advances on mobile telephones designed to create roadmaps for persons with visual impairments.
- 4) Create a Fact Sheet Pamphlet on Accessibility issues to include a list of barriers and possible solutions to eliminate the barriers.

The above plan supports the CUPE BC Action Plan at every level by Strengthening our Membership, Building Solidarity and Capacity, and defends the dignity of our work. Further, in support of the Political Action section of the CUPE BC Action Plan, we propose the following:

- 5) To request Labour Councils include a list of questions in preparation for community/local government and school board candidate interviews aimed at ascertaining the support of specific candidates in the area of disability rights and

where they stand on disability issues and the continued fight towards removal of barriers to inclusion.

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- Partnering with the equity committees on Equity Night. Videos and cultural entertainment are planned.
- Disability Activist Award.
- Two resolutions submitted by the committee – including one asking CUPE BC to work with CUPE National in developing a tool kit to raise awareness, remove barriers, and resistance to the hiring of persons with developmental and intellectual disabilities.
- Convention Booth/Table – shared between the equity committees with literature and video streaming for delegates.

Further Actions

- December 3 – International Day for Persons with Disabilities – Committee would like to support the BC Federation of Labour in a community event on this date.
- CUPE National Persons with Disabilities Committee – support their ongoing efforts including the “Solidarity of Abilities” campaign.
- CUPE Structure – continue to support having additional Diversity Vice-Presidents on the National Executive Board.
- Participate in a tour/inspection of the new CUPE BC offices with specific deficiencies to access listed and recommendations to CUPE BC.

In closing, the committee would like to acknowledge the great work of our Staff Advisor, Dan Todd for his fantastic support on disability issues. Also we must acknowledge our Human Rights Representative, Cheryl Colborne for her amazing support to the

committee. Many thanks to the CUPE BC clerical staff for their support and assistance at our meetings. Finally, we need to acknowledge and thank Paul Faoro, Trevor (4ever) Davies, and the CUPE BC Executive Board for their support and commitment to equity and inclusion.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank Lee, Chair, and Diversity Vice President, CUPE BC
Sunera Samarakoon, Co-Chair and Alternate Diversity Vice President, CUPE BC
Monica Brady
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Dan Gawthrop – Staff Advisor
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Cheryl Colborne - Human Rights Representative

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