

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR  
REPORT TO CUPE BC Division CONVENTION – 2018**

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For CUPE members in B.C. this past year has been rather exciting, with a historic provincial election last May followed by the swearing in of a new BC NDP government. Since then, improvements to the minimum wage, hospital wait times, education funding, social assistance rates, and other initiatives promised by the Horgan government will go a long way toward improving the quality of work and living for far more British Columbians than was ever possible under the BC Liberals.

The fight to restore free collective bargaining will require ongoing coordination and cooperation between CUPE Sectors and Locals, and a much closer relationship with affiliates in the House of Labour. CUPE BC leadership continues to forge alliances with sister unions, and we are relentless in our fight for a more united front in dealing with provincially funded sector bargaining. Increased cooperation and coordination is crucial to restoring free collective bargaining and to ensuring that every union can get the best deal possible for its members.

The concept of increased cooperation and solidarity is a centrepiece of the National Executive Board Policy on Collective Bargaining: Resisting Concessions and Two-Tier Proposals and Defending Free Collective Bargaining. Over the past year, we have worked with staff to create a BC Regional plan to implement the requirements of the Policy. We have also increased our communication with District Councils and continue to solicit the views of CUPE members in a variety of ways, from online surveys and social media to worksite visits and local meetings.

A review of the NEB's policy sets out the history of CUPE's actions in defending free collective bargaining since 1963. Never, in our more than half-century history have we faced such a coordinated right-wing attack across this country as we are facing right now.

CUPE's national and regional bargaining strategy is an excellent tool for maximizing our efforts to make gains at the table. But we're not stopping there: this June, national staff will also be working collaboratively with the B.C. Division on an all-presidents bargaining and educational think tank aimed at assisting locals for the next round of negotiations.

Apart from reviewing the national and regional bargaining policies, the think tank will cover topics such as model language for occupational health and safety, violence in the workplace, and precarious workers; legal issues surrounding essential services and replacement workers; how to access CUPE's Defence Fund and cost share process to launch a campaign; and how locals should best operate during a strike.

Our structure in CUPE, with its long history of local autonomy, makes us strong. True coordination requires a degree of loss of local autonomy for the greater good, however, and we have some work to do on that front. It is sometimes a long process for presidents and other local leaders to educate members on the benefits of strategy changes aimed at supporting each other and sister unions as needed.

With such efforts, we will continue to impress upon members the need for an understanding of the economics of collective bargaining and the need for coordination. All in all, we were very successful at most tables this past year, and I thank the staff sector coordinators, staff and membership for their hard work.

In 2019, most of our municipal locals will be preparing for or going to the bargaining table. Since the last round, there has been increased scrutiny by several right-wing, business-backed organizations targeting public sector collective agreements. Municipalities continue to face strong pushback from employers on benefits. We are seeing, for the most part, wage increases in the 1.8%-2% range. Despite the pushback, we are seeing improvements by many locals in benefits.

The Lower Mainland Municipal locals have already conducted four all-presidents meetings and the Okanagan locals have a meeting scheduled. Locals are discussing how we must work together to establish a strategic plan with long-term and short-term

goals. Precarious work and the growth of temporary employment will be a major focus in the coming round of negotiations.

B.C. school districts were severely underfunded by the previous government and faced severe difficulties balancing their budgets due to the serious under funding. The impact on our K-12 workers was devastating in some districts. Adequate and stable, predictable funding needs to be allocated in K-12 so that school districts can meet their obligations to deliver accessible, quality education – with adequate funding to include full-time hours for support staff.

Many districts have very few bell-to-bell EA positions. Our locals continue to plan jointly with the school districts on allocations for the Support Staff Learning Improvement Fund (SSLIF) to assist in increasing hours for EA. We are excited about the BC NDP government's recent announcement of replacing the "one-size-fits-all" funding formula for school districts. The government will now take into account the differences in urban and rural communities.

Our K-12 staff and sector coordinators continue to work closely with the Division Officers to ensure that Government and the public recognize the important role that CUPE K-12 support personnel play in education. The Provincial Job Evaluation Committee continues to forge ahead and make progress in the K-12 sector. The committee has identified districts and locals that will take part in the pilot JE project, and Brother Peter Coombes will continue to assist the parties in this long-term project.

The K-12 Presidents Council has met several times this year and is in the initial preparations for bargaining some time this year. Some of the key issues to be addressed are hours of work for support staff, violence in the workplace, and increased unpaid work. The K-12 Presidents Council has also struck a taskforce to look into violence in the workplace, develop contract language and produce tools to help reduce the violence. Staff in the K-12 sector will continue to work with this task force and locals to ensure that locals have the tools required to combat violence in the workplace in all

its forms, including domestic and sexual violence, and to protect our members' physical and mental health and safety.

B.C.'s Health Sector continues to see continued reorganization by the various health authorities in Community Health. At the CUPE Community Health Bargaining Conference held this February, delegates from the CUPE Community Health locals in B.C. elected their bargaining committees for both the Community Bargaining Association (CBA) and Health Science Professionals' Bargaining Association (HSPBA).

Delegates to the Bargaining Conference also identified CUPE's bargaining priorities for the upcoming round of negotiations, and common themes for both groups included the need for a significant wage increase and addressing ever-increasing workload. Workload is a major issue in this sector and is negatively impacting client/patient access leading to incidents of harassment in the workplace and burnout, and complaints to professional Colleges, which exist as a regulatory body for certain classifications.

CUPE's Health Care Presidents' Council and CUPE National are responding to this issue through a membership engagement cost share campaign. This campaign is underway and will include direct membership engagement through worksite visits, videos and photographs featuring members from various classifications in Community Health, workload strategy sessions to work collaboratively with members in forming an action plan, and a final report to be delivered to stakeholders in government, the Health Authorities and others.

In October, Minister of Health Adrian Dix announced the creation of a standalone bargaining unit for the Ambulance Paramedics of British Columbia, represented by CUPE Local 873. This change fulfills an election promise and will result in the relocation of the more than 3,600 CUPE members from the Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) to a new bargaining unit. The FBA supports the recommendation to better reflect the distinct nature of their work. As a standalone bargaining unit, paramedics and dispatchers will remain under the responsibility of the Provincial Health Services

Authority under a separate collective agreement to further the collaborative relationship with the employer.

The Community Social Services Sector has formed its bargaining committee and met to develop proposals. Recruitment and retention continues to be an issue; violence in the workplace and the fentanyl crisis prevalent in this sector continue to be unaddressed. On February 1<sup>st</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, we saw wage adjustments for a number of members of 1.5 and 2.5 per cent, through the classification review. Further, there will be an additional dollar amount adjustment for another classification.

Locals in the Colleges and Universities sectors have started strategically planning for coordinated bargaining efforts for the 2019 round of negotiations. As in other sectors, our post-secondary members face an unacceptably high level of precarious work and increased violence at their campuses.

We will continue to fight at the bargaining table for real wage increases, a living wage, secure full-time jobs, increased pensions and expanded pensions, and benefit coverage for all CUPE members including part-time and casual members. On this front, pension negotiations are moving in a positive direction at SFU with all parties agreeing to the continuation and improvement of the Defined Benefit Plan. We anticipate developing an education process, and a ratification vote will take place in the fall.

The Strong Communities Working Group (SCWG) continues to meet regularly, and is attended by CUPE BC leadership, the Regional Director and Assistant Regional Director. The positions of Local Government Liaison, Local Community Organizer, Provincial Election Coordinator, Anti-Privatization Coordinator, Legislative Coordinator, and Organizing Coordinator currently comprise the SCWG. They are supported by Communications, Research and Union Development staff at the meetings.

In B.C., we continue to focus our anti-privatization efforts and have been successful on several privatization fronts across the province. We will continue to push forward to expand public services and create stable, secure, full-time jobs.

Under the Strong Communities banner, CUPE BC and CUPE Local 1816 launched a campaign to elect new progressive board members at benefits provider Pacific Blue Cross (PBC) after a summer-long lock out of PBC employees. The campaign, which ran for several months, required the identification and recruitment of candidates, as well as assisting those candidates with many legal issues. CUPE BC and the Strong Communities working group were instrumental in mobilizing sister unions in B.C. in support of our efforts.

We mobilized members from many unions including HEU, BCTF, Unifor, MoveUp and other BCFED affiliates. Over 700 members attended the AGM on December 13, including hundreds from Local 1816. A strong message was sent by CUPE to all employers in B.C. that we can mobilize and support each other in tough times. In the end, we were successful in electing our full slate of seven new members to the Pacific Blue Cross Board. A job well done by all staff and the BC Division for the role they played in this campaign.

As we continue to grow, we enjoy a highly functional relationship between CUPE's regional staff and the B.C. Division. We have political capacity through the SCWG that is second to none, and we are well placed to provide leadership for members, locals and sectors, and in working with sister trade unions in B.C. All Locals are encouraged to seek the assistance and resources of the SCWG in appropriate situations through their assigned Servicing Representative.

At the 2017 National Convention, delegates adopted Strategic Directions 2017-2019: The Way Forward. Several important initiatives are identified, not the least of which is organizing. The National Directors continue to work closely with our Organizing team and the Division to identify workers at CUPE worksites that are non-union. We have significantly increased our organizing efforts in this province.

Our Organizing department has been instrumental in several national organizing drives. For example, we have just organized approximately 1,300 RCMP civilian members

across the country, members who work as telecoms and intercept monitor analysts. Approximately 400 of these RCMP members are in B.C.

Organizing coordinator Brother David Fleming continues to take a lead role and provide significant support in the National WestJet organizing campaign. He and Sister Zoe Magnus are responsible for the organizing efforts and member organizers in both B.C. and Alberta. This campaign is gaining momentum, so if you know a WestJet flight attendant, make sure you connect them to our organizers.

In B.C. we have seen our numbers in organizing grow by 61 per cent in 2017. We organized workers in the municipal, childcare, arts and culture, airlines and university sectors. We also organized three federal certifications, with ground staff at China Airlines in Vancouver, Flair Airline flight attendants in five cities across Canada, and most recently the aforementioned RCMP civilian members.

We welcomed close to 700 new members in the B.C. region. Congratulations to all staff and members who were involved in these organizing drives. I encourage locals to continue to provide organizing opportunities to our National organizers.

Staffing remains unsettled as retirements, illness, postings and leaves of absence take a toll on staff ranks. I thank you for your patience as we recruit, train and mentor new Representatives.

The National Officers met with B.C.'s National Representatives on February 1. Their presence and the information they provided was greatly appreciated, and we look forward to working closely with National in the future. Many initiatives in B.C. would not be possible without the ongoing support of Brothers Charles Fleury and Mark Hancock. Their support for the Division and CUPE staff in B.C. has always been there and we appreciate it.

In early February, CUPE BC Regional Office and Division offices moved to our new location in Burnaby's Metrotown district. This was a historic shift into a new era, as the move marks CUPE's transition from traditional office space to a more collaborative model of open-concept work space. We have created a more inclusive environment for our staff and an amazing conference suite for our members. Locals are encouraged to work with your reps to book meeting rooms for bargaining, arbitrations, and training. There are nine meeting rooms in the members' conference suite that can be booked for week days, evenings and weekends.

The Fraser Valley Area Office also relocated this year, with the same shift to a collaborative work space. This is the second open concept work space for CUPE National and will help set the new standard for the country. This office is approximately 3,000 square feet on South Fraser Way, and has meeting rooms for locals to use for bargaining, local meetings, and the Fraser Valley District Council.

It continues to be a pleasure working closely with the CUPE BC Division. B.C. enjoys the most active Division in Canada, with Brothers Paul and Trevor working tirelessly to improve the working lives of not just CUPE members, but all workers.

I'd like to take this time to thank all staff, both National and Division staff for the work that you do everyday. We do have the most amazing staff in the country and they play a leading role in fighting for high quality public services and improving the lives and working conditions of our members.

I wish you all well in your deliberations. Have a successful convention.

Meena Brisard  
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CUPE – BC Region