



## **CUPE BC Anti Privatization Committee Report to Convention – May 2019**

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We continue to fight attacks on our jobs in all sectors of CUPE in municipalities, school Districts, post-secondary education, social services, healthcare and others. Locals throughout the province continue to challenge employers to bring more work back in-house.

### **Bringing Work Back In-House Pilot Projects**

CUPE BC and the Anti Privatization Committee (APC) continue our process for Locals to apply for funding and support to help bring work back in-house. One of those current projects is CUPE Local 7000's, campaign that deals with many ongoing contracting-out issues at SkyTrain. A significant freedom of information request has produced a substantial account of the Employer's unnecessary use of private contractors. The Employer has started to be open to discussion with the local to bring this work in-house. The local will continue making the case that it is in the best interests of user satisfaction and safety for CUPE Local 7000 members to conduct all maintenance and repairs.

### **Privatization**

In every sector we represent across the province, CUPE locals share in their struggles to bring work in-house and to fight their employers from increasingly contracting out services.

We see a wide variety in the services that are contracted out across the workplaces represented by our locals; garbage collection, recycling collection, snow removal, custodial, skilled trades and food/catering services are among the most contracted out.

Where locals campaigned to bring services in-house, some were not successful in their attempts. The issues they identified as preventing them from bringing those services in-house were a current lack of capacity or equipment, and employer

resistance. This of course is no surprise as we see employers continuing to pass budgets that exclude investments in equipment and training that would allow public sector workers to continue to do this work. This lack of funding over many years has led to a situation where employers no longer have the capacity to do the work and where there is often very little political will to change the course and start to invest in the necessary capital and education to keep this work public. Even though, borrowing funds from the Municipal Finance Authority at much lower interest than contractors can get, is available to purchase the required equipment.

But it's not all bad news. Locals have been successful in bringing their work home. Locals have seen success in bringing back grass cutting, landscaping, skilled trades, garbage collection, janitorial services and more. Locals identified the factors in the decision to bring this work in-house as economic concerns, greater flexibility and accountability were cited most often as the reasons these services were brought in-house.

Locals used a variety of tactics in their campaigns to bring their work back home. Most often locals achieved results through discussion at labour management meetings or through lobbying. Locals also monitored the performance of the contractors and did research to help them make the case to the employer to bring the work in-house. Very few locals decided to use campaign tactics such as social or conventional media, rallies, direct mail or community coalitions to support the fight to stop services from continuing to be contracted out.

We know that privatization isn't just a political issue, it is a bargaining issue. There exists a variety of language among our locals; the majority are protected to one degree or another from further contracting-out of their work. While most locals do have job security language, most have not been successful in using this language to defend against the privatization of their work.

Each local must track and respond to their employer's attempts to privatize their work and to develop campaigns to bring work that was previously lost, back in-house. However, we see that more than 85% of locals do not have a contracting-out or privatization committee to deal with these issues.

Locals of course are not dealing with every issue on their own. There are a number of ways that CUPE BC and CUPE National can help locals bring work in-house. Locals continue to get help from their national servicing representative, and used the help of a CUPE national research representative. Other resources used by locals to fight privatization were the Anti-Privatization Committee and the CUPE BC Anti-Privatization Coordinator.

### **Bringing Our Work Back Home Binder**

The APC Committee reminds locals of this great resource when looking at bringing work back in house. The binder has many samples to use and links to find the supporting tools to assist you in standing up for public services. There is also an expanded section on job security language to help locals identify the current level of protection in their collective agreements and to help strengthen that language. The binder is available electronically on the CUPE BC website.

### **Canada Infrastructure Bank**

Information requests made about the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB) and its practices are met with resistance. The promise of a transparent process does not exist.

CUPE National researchers report that the CIB recently hosted an annual public meeting that lasted only 17 minutes, provided little notice of the meeting and no information about its privatization plans. CUPE staff were among the 73 people nationwide who took part in the webinar. The meeting was far from transparent about what infrastructure the bank is considering privatizing or what communities would be affected. The bank already has a record of secrecy, with work clearly underway behind the scenes. Canadians need full transparency about the bank and the projects it's considering. The CIB takes aims at roads, bridges, water and transit systems and will hand unprecedented control of critical projects to for profit corporations. As Canadians we built this infrastructure together, it belongs to us, and it is not for sale. Read the full article at [cupe.ca/not-for-sale](http://cupe.ca/not-for-sale).

**K-12**

We are happy to see the Provincial Government is moving towards addressing the shortfalls in K-12 underfunding and we support their efforts. We hope to see a new funding formula.

**Shared Services**

Shared services remain an area of serious contracting-out concern. It refers to a situation where different public sector authorities collaborate in the area of service delivery with a view to reducing costs. Shared services continue to be a priority for monitoring.

**Colleges and Universities**

Colleges and universities are continuing the trend to avoid additional budget burdens by outsourcing their services and initiating agreements with outside agencies to create societies or corporate agreements. One of these initiatives is BC Net for advanced education, which creates contacts for vendors and partners in the communities throughout BC for procurement of our services. They continue to seek other types of funding which cannot be allocated to public sector workers in the institution. This is done under the guise of “shared services” or “cooperative gains.” The institutions that have signed off and restructured on “shared services” agreements is having an impact on our members. Colleges and universities are preparing to commence bargaining at the time of writing this report.

**Transportation**

School bussing continues to be a struggle to maintain and bring back bussing in-house. The private company often employs retired drivers where benefits are not a priority. Poor road maintenance and driving conditions, due to a lack of accountability from the private contractors who do road maintenance, continues to be a problem. This is happening throughout the province and resulting in more injuries. Locals should continue to advocate in bringing bussing back in-house to ensure the safety of both students and drivers. There is talk of major rapid transit investment in the mainland and the nature of the funding is unknown.

## **Wastewater**

CUPE and our locals have been successful in fighting against P3s in the wastewater sector, because the treatment of wastewater when delivered publicly will ensure the best value and service for taxpayers. Locals need to continue to monitor these threats.

Iona island in the lower mainland has a 1.9 billion dollar upgrade in the works. We are keeping a close watch on this.

## **Provincial Government**

The Liberal Government Partnerships BC offices are closed down. The government has introduced the Community Benefits Agreement. In coordination with the federal elections, we will continue to monitor how provincial projects are funded.

## **Conclusion**

As mentioned at the opening of this report, all CUPE sectors are constantly under attack to eliminate public sector jobs and privatize them. As you have read in this report you can see where some of these attacks are coming from. With infrastructure replacement and maintenance, corporations are seeing a golden opportunity to privatize and eliminate public sector jobs so they can put more profits into their pockets.

We need to be aware in our locals of key phrases such as; alternate funding, core service reviews, service delivery projects, efficiencies and shared services, as any of these could be a prelude to contracting out and privatization of our services and facilities.

We also need to be proactive by having Anti-Privatization committees in our locals to keep track through existing or establishing Municipal Watch, School Board Watch committees in our locals, monitoring employer's budgets to see what they might contract out and what can be brought back in-house. Bargaining protection language from contracting-out, and language to have committees to see the feasibility of contracting work in. CUPE locals continue to take on projects to protect our work and to bring our work back in-house. Keep up the good work. Your

committee is here to assist you where we can and to help you with the sharing of information and resources.

Thank you to Nathan Allen and Kathryn Davies for their contributions to this committee and to Robert Gilchrist for his past contributions to this committee.

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