



CUPE BC Colleges Committee Report to Convention – May 2019

The CUPE BC Colleges Committee is comprised of local presidents or designates from BC's colleges, institutes and special-purpose universities who are appointed by the CUPE BC Executive Board.

Our work in the sector deals with debates and discussions of challenging issues – equity, Truth and Reconciliation (TRC), accessibility – so we are often on the cutting edge of these debates. Workload and retention issues; international students; sexualized and gender-based violence on campus; access to post-secondary education; truth and reconciliation, and inadequate funding continue to be significant challenges facing post-secondary workers. As a sectoral committee, our challenges are ongoing and resolutions are difficult to attain in the short-term; however, we continue to advocate for affordable and accessible public post-secondary education for this generation and future generations of workers and students.

Work Load and Retention Issues

Resources at post-secondary schools across the province are being stretched beyond capacity. Workloads for staff throughout institutions have been unmanageable, resulting in increased sick leave, lower morale and people walking away from successful careers. There are many factors contributing to this influx of workload, such as increases in the international student body, the growing demand for accessibility and mental health services, and the generational shift from Millennials to Generation Z.

International students bring diversity and vibrancy into our institutions and are a welcomed addition to the student body. That said, planning for the increased number of international students has fallen short, resulting in increased workload for operational, instructional and administration staff across the province. International students have many cultural differences from Canadian societal norms. Many of these differences result in academic misconduct, suspension or failures; all of which require additional

resources from instructional and operational staff. All of which are not currently being staffed to accommodate these demands.

Student service needs are on the rise and have been for many years. Awareness of stress, anxiety, accommodation, and accessibility needs have become a cultural norm. However, our institutions have not increased staffing levels to accommodate the demand for these services. This has created longer wait times to meet with counsellors and advisors and increased demand for resources to help students successfully navigate through the post-secondary system. Each of these factors have contributed to increased workload and worker exhaustion for post-secondary staff.

Generation Z have higher expectations than the Millennial generation. They are a generation that has never had to open a map to look for directions or a book to do research for a paper and expect services that are instantaneous. They also look for personalized services to make them feel like individuals and are not afraid to share experiences, good or bad on social media. These expectations put additional stress on staff and faculty as they are already feeling burdened by work overload.

There is a systemic issue across the province with staff retention at our post-secondary institutions. This is a direct result of workload, burnout and compensation that does not keep up with inflation. Institutions are seeing turnover in staff at exponential rates. Staff turnover also puts additional pressures on the remaining staff who have to train, as well as do their own duties. One would be hard pressed to find an institution that doesn't have multiple job postings in faculty, operational and administration staff at any given time.

Ongoing commitment to combatting sexualized violence

Sexualized violence continues to be an issue in all worksites. In the post-secondary sector, this reality is exacerbated by the complex and challenging power dynamics created through the interactions of students, faculty and staff. Across the country, post-secondary institutions are attempting to address these problems by instituting legally required sexual violence policies and procedures; however, in many cases these

policies are created without consultation with unions and, as a result, often don't address these complexities.

In BC, the Colleges and Universities Committees are working together to combat this trend by continuing to lobby the government. In meetings with Minister of Advanced Education Melanie Mark, CUPE and representatives of the post-secondary sector raised concerns about issues of procedural fairness regarding these policies and the union's legal mandate under the Labour Code to represent our members. CUPE provided the Minister with a report from the University of Alberta on restorative justice initiatives around sexual violence and asked for her support in encouraging employers to include unions in development of future policies. The need for advocacy with the Ministry and at our individual institutions continues.

The committee also continues to be a leader within our union around combatting sexual violence. After years of activism and coordination with the National Post-Secondary Task Force, the Colleges Committee was able to celebrate the release of CUPE's new sexual violence toolkit on December 6, 2018. This toolkit provides resources to locals in every sector that will assist them in creating safer worksites, decreasing sexualized violence, and bargaining stronger language to protect workers from sexualized violence.

While the new toolkit is an important step forward, more work is needed. Sexual violence is not just a reality in our worksites, unfortunately, it is a reality our members also face within our union – at meetings, events and union education. The Colleges Committee calls for the union to walk the talk and take a hard look at our internal culture and structures with a view to ensuring a safe union for all members. As a union, we must lead by example holding ourselves to the highest standards and, when those standards are breached, we need the tools and processes to address those situations and properly support our members.

“Our Time To Act” Campaign

After years of government underfunding, access to high quality post-secondary education is at risk. That is why it is ***Our Time to Act***.

High quality, publicly funded, accessible post-secondary education is essential. It helps to foster engaged, well-informed citizens with the skills needed to participate in a changing economy. It helps to lessen social and economic disparities. And it contributes to our country's economic, cultural, and intellectual development.

However, chronic government underfunding is creating a crisis. It's transforming post-secondary education from a public good to a private benefit enjoyed by the wealthy. It's making work more precarious, putting the quality of education at risk. It's opening the door to corporate control over higher education and research, threatening academic freedom.

Federal transfers for post-secondary education are almost 40% less per student now than they were twenty-five years ago. While post-secondary institutions received more than 80% of their operating revenue from governments thirty years ago, today, government funding has shrunk to less than 50%.

Tuition fees at Canadian universities have increased by three times the rate of inflation since 1990. In the same period, average student debt has grown 40% while average real wages have stagnated.

The consequences are serious. Both students burdened by debt and workers dealing with short-term contracts and low wages struggle to participate fully in the life of our communities. They face limited economic choices, such as being unable to buy a car or qualify for a mortgage. They may have difficulty starting a family or caring for elderly parents. No wonder that debt and precarity are associated with mental and physical health problems and higher levels of stress.

This is about choices. Governments in other countries are making the choice to invest in post-secondary education. Canada can make that choice, too. It is up to us.

In the ***Our Time to Act*** campaign, the Colleges Committee has partnered with the National Post-Secondary Task Force to call on the Federal Government to be a real partner in post-secondary education again. Through this campaign, we are demanding that the Federal Government:

- Adopt a Post-Secondary Education Act with clear conditions and accountability measures for federal funding;
- Create a dedicated Post-Secondary Transfer;
- Increase transfer funding by 40% to restore the level of per-student PSE funding that was provided in 1993; and
- Work with the provinces to reduce and eventually eliminate tuition fees for post-secondary education.

So, what can you do? Do what CUPE members are so good at – advocate for post-secondary education! Write, call or visit your Member of Parliament, sign our petition, send a postcard to the Prime Minister, share information on social media, and have conversations with your friends and family.

For more information, visit <https://cupe.ca/our-time-act>.

Bill 18 repealed by Bill 36 - Union activists no longer barred from holding seat on Board of Governors

Since 2012, Bill 18 – the Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2011 - has severely hampered unionized employees that were active in their unions to represent their constituency bodies on their Board of Governors (BOG). The College and Institutes Act states there is an elected support/operational staff seat on each Board, but Bill 18 barred activists from participating as BOG members. We are very pleased to share that in 2018, Bill 36 repealed these regressive measures.

Most BOGs in BC consist of eight members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. Members elected by their respective constituents are one support/operational staff member, one Faculty member (both three-year terms), and two students for one-year terms. As well, the President of the College/Institute and the Education Council Chair are non-voting members of each BOG. Generally speaking the make-up of the appointed BOG members has changed dramatically with our New Democrat Government.

Truth and Reconciliation

“Education got us into this mess and education will get us out.” Senator Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations recognized that educational institutions have the ability to be a lynch pin in moving reconciliation forward within Canada. Colleges can play a key role in changing attitudes and need to be leaders in promoting connection with and understanding of Indigenous culture. Each of the institutions represented by the CUPE BC Colleges Committee has its own unique relationship with its local First Nations and, as a result, has created unique paths in moving towards reconciliation.

The time to educate our society out of the mess has started and CUPE members at Colleges are working hard to answer the calls to action issued by the TRC.

College and Institutes Canada Conference

The 2018 Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICAN) conference took place in Victoria. The conference theme, NA'TSA'MAHT, "working as one" proudly included the local Indigenous peoples, from keynote to opening ceremony events to conference MC.

This annual conference includes colleges, and institutes from across Canada having representatives from senior management, students, faculty and BOGs in attendance. While the conference contained some valuable learning, most was broader knowledge in terms of international issues and gender-based issues. Of note was the palpable unease of many BC appointed Board of Governors members whose terms were ending soon. These BOG members appointed under the Liberal Government were convinced none of them would be reappointed under the new government. They were not that interested in hearing that our current government did not unilaterally remove all the appointed BOG members like the Liberal government did in 2001.

The Colleges committee takes interest in the sponsors, exhibits and guest speakers as there are organizations that would like to privatize areas of Colleges and Institutes-such as bookstores, cafeterias, registration, and facilities management to name a few. Our presence helps to neutralize the privateers as well it gives us an opportunity to talk about CUPE as the union of choice for Public Education.

Our continuing thanks to CUPE BC for allowing our Chair and co- chair the opportunity to spread the CUPE word.

Engagement

Engaging our memberships and obtaining community support for CUPE members is an ongoing challenge facing the post-secondary sector. The Colleges Committee remains committed to fighting for gains in social and economic justice for our members by engaging and motivating our members through communication, education and bargaining.

Our committee is committed to educating our membership, employers and the general public on the values of union principles and the benefits of union membership.

Our committee members encourage you to join us in our fight for publicly funded post-secondary education.

Respectfully submitted:

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