



CUPE BC Municipal Committee Report to Convention – May 2019

As always, there is a lot of activity in the municipal sector in our locals. Our members have been active in local politics, preparation for bargaining in two large regions, and this committee is busy planning to host the 2019 CUPE Western Municipal Conference next month in Kelowna on behalf of CUPE BC. We want to bring to your attention some of our successes and some of the major concerns in our sector.

Positive items to highlight from the last year include the video produced for the CUPE South Coast Municipal & Library locals in their cost share campaign in preparation for bargaining. This committee had discussed creating a video to promote our work and now a great one exists. We hope to be able to show it to you here at convention. CUPE municipal locals got involved in the local government elections that took place in October by working with Labour Councils and other union groups to interview and vet candidates to receive endorsements and campaign support. There were successes around the province and new relationships built with our employers. The challenge to us all now is to maintain those connections over the next four years; to support and to hold to account those we helped elect.

On the bargaining front, the Thompson Okanagan Mainline Strategic Bargaining Committee as well as the South Coast Municipal & Library locals group are doing great work in communicating to the public about our workers and preparing for bargaining together. These are promising models of our strength when we try to coordinate our

efforts. Municipal locals are reminded that when possible, partnering with our employers for events around National Public Works Week is a positive way to promote our workers and our union to the public. Several locals do this regularly and get great public exposure. This year National Public Works Week is May 19 - 25.

We are noticing an increased interest from employers around contracting in work that should be ours. They are clearly seeing the benefits of quality work, efficiency, and cost savings. For example, CUPE Local 454 now represents Delta Seniors Bus drivers. CUPE Local 1004 is talking with the City of Vancouver about several types of work that could be brought in house. CUPE Local 15 discovered that the City of Vancouver wasn't honouring their Living Wage pledge in paying contracted workers and called them to account. This is a step that could lead to contracting in some of that work.

Areas of growing concern in our sector are some new workplace drug policies brought in after the legalization of cannabis as well as ongoing oppressive Attendance Management policies. We are starting to see attempts at implementing random drug testing, an issue which was raised at the CUPE National Sector Conference in November. There we heard from our National Health and Safety staff representative that the legalization of cannabis does not change the employer's responsibility to maintain a healthy and safe workplace. Random testing does little to detect impairment at the workplace, and it detracts from the employer's role in effectively and properly managing workplace hazards. It also intrudes upon a worker's privacy and dignity.

Such testing has been largely rejected by courts and arbitrators in Canada. Most drug tests (with the notable exception of alcohol) only determine if a substance is present in a worker's body and does not test levels of impairment and CUPE opposes random testing. The bottom line regarding the new reality of legal cannabis consumption is that there is no change in safety practices - we don't go to work impaired, for the safety of ourselves and our coworkers. Many things can cause impairment, including lack of sleep and over the counter cold or allergy medication. What we need is education for employers and members around safety and causes of impairment, not random drug testing.

There continues to be inconsistent application of and harassment of members from Attendance Management programs. Members are going to work sick for fear of 'being on the program'. Average absence rates for employers are calculated in a one size fits all manner, not taking into consideration different shifts, schedules and work locations. One particularly bad example is an employer who now requires a doctor's note **before** a member goes off to have surgery, in addition to requiring one when they return to work. It would be beneficial to all CUPE members if the next CUPE BC Municipal Committee helped with the collection of these policies and programs from locals so that CUPE staff could research and analyze them.

Committee members are looking forward to hosting our fellow members and CUPE staff from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba in Kelowna from June 11 to 14 for the CUPE Western Municipal Conference. We have great speakers and workshops lined up

and anticipate enjoying social time with our comrades in the Okanagan region. It's been a great two years sharing and planning together and we're grateful to do this work with you all.

Respectfully submitted:

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