



CUPE BC Persons with Disabilities Committee Report to Convention – May 2019

Since CUPE BC's convention in April 2018, the Persons with Disabilities Committee has met twice, continuing to work on the committee's action plan. The committee continues to have participation challenges. This past term we had one member resign, another retire and another member with major health challenges. We are a small committee to begin with, and the loss of activist participation increases our challenges. We did have a new member join – Dan Morrison – Local 23. Our staff advisor Dan Todd was reassigned, and we now have Cheryl Colborne, BC Human Rights representative advising our committee.

Ongoing Action Plan

As noted in our last convention report, the committee decided to pursue a narrower focus aimed at achieving specific measurable outcomes to assure a baseline minimum compliance with disabilities-related accessibility and inclusivity provisions by our local unions.

1) Vision 20/20 Accessible CUPE BC by 2020

The committee met with a disability services provider contracted by the provincial government that provided the members information on their work and various contacts for disabilities-related services.

2) Promotional Materials

CUPE National developing a new poster and luggage tag. New resources need to have braille. There is consideration for the equity committees to combine logos into one - discussions ongoing.

3) Social Media

There are ongoing discussions regarding the CUPE BC website and accessibility. CUPE BC released a statement regarding December 3 – International Persons with Disabilities Day.

(https://www.cupe.bc.ca/cupe_bc_celebrates_international_persons_with_disabilities_day)

4) Accessibility Audit Checklist

Work in progress – develop five points for locals to start the process to audit their local. The checklist will include:

- Physical Accessibility (access, parking, elevator, room, wheelchairs etc.).
- Resources (materials available in Braille, website, paper copies large and small print, assigned liaison for facilitation before, during and after, face to face support and assistance).
- Allocate designated position for PWD on local executive.
- Bargaining (Draft Equality Survey 2017 developed for locals to use for this and a lot of other areas).
- Community Participation: Does your local promote and provide opportunities for participation in community events for all of your members, particularly persons with disabilities, visible and non-visible.

On Feb 2018, Cindy Chisholm, Sunera Samarakoon and Trevor Davies had the privilege of inspecting the new CUPE BC Regional Office building for accessibility purposes. The committee is happy to report that the building has accessible washrooms, accessible entrances and two accessible parking spots.

2019 CUPE BC Convention

The committee has submitted three resolutions to convention for delegates to consider and will be participating in the Equity Forum prior to the commencement of the convention. We continue to advocate for the Disability Activist Award to be presented at convention as disabled workers are among the most marginalized groups in society.

Recent Developments

1) Bill C-81 – Accessible Canada Act

This federal legislation looks to proactively eliminate barriers and ensure greater opportunities for Canadians with Disabilities.

Disturbing facts:

- 3.8 Million Canadians over the age of 15 have a disability.
- Less than 50% have jobs.
- Canadians with disabilities earn 44% less and are more likely to live in poverty.

The act will apply in Parliament, Government of Canada, and federally-regulated private sector.

Disability organizations, and advocacy groups have raised many concerns about the power and scope of the act. The act has passed in the House and advocates hope that their concerns can be addressed in the Senate through amendments (in Second reading at time of this report).

2) National Conference – Disability and Work in Canada

Conference held in Ottawa – December 4-5, 2018, attended by people with lived experience, including injured workers, disability organizations, community groups, service providers, employers, and labour.

Vision Statement – Employment throughout Canada is inclusive; people with and without disabilities have the same opportunities and choices in careers, jobs and work.

Four Pillars

- Disability-confident and inclusive workplaces
- Comprehensive supports for Canadians with disabilities
- Effective partnerships
- Measurement and accountability

A further round of consultation will take place, to seek further input on strategy and gather opinions from all stakeholders.

3) Supreme Court Decision

On January 25, 2019, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) released a landmark decision in *S.A. v. Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation*. This case is of national importance and significance because it ensures that many persons with

disabilities can continue to access vital social programs they rely on to maintain an equal and adequate standard of living.

Thanks and Acknowledgement

In closing, the committee would like to thank and acknowledge the support of all the equity committees – Indigenous, Persons of Colour, and Pink Triangle in our coordination of solidarity and advocacy for human rights and social justice. We would also like to thank the CUPE BC Executive Board and our officers Paul and Trevor for their continued support, as well as clerical support at CUPE BC – our MoveUp sisters. Finally we like to thank Dan Todd, staff advisor and Cheryl Colborne, Human Rights Representative for their dedication and support of the committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Lee, Chair – Local 1004
Sunera Samarakoon, Co-Chair – Local 15
Monica Brady, Local 2052
Laura Bulk, Local 2278
Daniel Morrison, Local 23
Pat Shade, Local 951
Margaret Varga, Local 3523
Cheryl Colborne, Staff Advisor & Human Rights Representative

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