

Regional Director

Report to CUPE BC Division Convention 2019

This past year has been a very exciting and special time for members in B.C. The quality of life has improved and continues to do so under the John Horgan BC NDP government. CUPE members played a key role in the by-election victory in Nanaimo, which maintained the slim majority this government needs to continue improving the quality of work and living conditions for all in B.C.

Good relations with the BC Federation of Labour and affiliates in the House of Labour have helped us coordinate with CUPE sectors and Locals to achieve good Collective Bargaining. By cooperating with other Unions and supporting each other, we have come together as a labour family to achieve the goals set forward in bargaining for all. What I have learned in my role is that working together and being on the same page makes us a powerhouse as a movement.

The National Bargaining Policy has not only helped us achieve gains at the table; it has also put Employers on notice that we will fight to maintain or improve our Collective Agreements and not follow the trend of some other unions by bargaining two-tier agreements or concessions. As those unions have found to their detriment, the trend of depleting workers' rights has had a very negative effect on organized labour. So I am proud that we have come together as a union and put a stop to this for CUPE workers. Employers are well aware that, along with no concessions or two-tiers, we will fight for precarious workers and language on violence in the workplace to secure better working conditions for you. We have learned a few lessons since last year, but with membership support we got through the tough times and I'm proud of that because it's the strong families that get through the tough times to enjoy the good times.

There is a lot of work this year as our two biggest sectors are in Local Bargaining. Meeting with Presidents from the K-12 and Municipal Sectors has allowed us to brainstorm together and come up with language to present at all tables. By sticking together, we are showing Employers that we are united. We have settled Provincial agreements but are now bargaining at local tables trying to strengthen local agreements

with language to protect precarious workers and address issues such as contracting out, violence in the workplace, and health and safety.

Our Coordinators in this Province have been working many hours with National Representatives and Specialists to make sure no one is left behind and to keep close tabs on trends that Employers are trying to set. Our structure in CUPE with Local Autonomy makes us strong, but we still have some work to do educating members about the benefits of changing strategy to support each other as needed. We will continue with such efforts as the need for coordinated Collective Bargaining.

I can't say enough about our staff, and how proud we are of them. As Assistant Regional Director I attend Directors meetings and can say this: in my view, we have the best staff in the country. We are extremely proud of the commitment and work of everyone from Support Staff to Specialists to National Representatives. We are also very lucky to have the support of CUPE BC. Your Division Officers turn to us and we turn to them; together we have one common goal, and that is to do our best for you, the members of this province.

In weekly meetings with the Strong Communities Working Group, the Regional and Assistant Regional Directors meet with the CUPE BC leadership and Sector Coordinators. The positions are Local Government Liaison, Local Community Organizer, Provincial Election Coordinator, Anti Privatization Coordinator, Legislative Coordinator, and Organizing Coordinator. This Working Group is supported at the meetings by Communications, Research, and Union Development staff. For various issues affecting you where you live and work, I encourage all locals to seek the assistance and resources of the Strong Communities Working Group.

Staff in our region have also worked closely with CUPE BC leadership over the past year in relation to provincial government consultations in areas affecting workers in our province. This includes consultations around restoring balance and fairness to the Labour Relations Code, improving floor rights prescribed by the Employment Standards Act, assisting some of the most vulnerable workers in the province, and improving both legislation and processes for injured workers in B.C. Our work in this regard is not

done, and we continue to work together to advocate for meaningful, positive change for workers and for communities across the province.

CUPE is the largest union in B.C. and in Canada, and we continue to grow. We have enjoyed many successes in organizing new locals as well as expanding our existing bargaining units. We can keep building on these successes by having you, the members, return to your workplaces and simply look around at who is in the Union and who is not. There are many workers in different sectors that are not unionized, and we should be providing them with access to our Union.

Since Convention last year, we have organized new members in Airlines, Municipal, Recreational Services, Libraries, and Community Social Services. We have organized a total of 868 members.

- WestJet in B.C. - 500 members
- City of Surrey - 200 + Recreational members
- Surrey Public Library – 48 members
- City of Vernon - 48 Jail Guards, Building Service members, and Ice monitors
- Powell River - 3 IT members
- District of Mission - 6 Victim Services members
- Fort St James - 18 Municipal and Library members, 11 TAPS Advocacy members, 9 Lax Kw'alaams Band Recreational members
- Nelson Cares Society - 25 Stepping Stones Emergency Shelter members

Our concentration is on organizing all workers; all workers need a home and we are willing to give them one. I thank our two lead Organizers, Zoe Magnus and David Fleming, and Aaron Young who assists them. Your passion and dedication are greatly appreciated.

The National Officers attend yearly meetings with staff in February. Their presence, and the information they provide, is greatly appreciated and we look forward to working closely with the National office. Many initiatives in B.C. would not be possible without the ongoing support of Brothers Mark and Charles. Their support for the Division and CUPE staff in B.C. has always been there, and we appreciate it.

I believe that CUPE BC is the most active division in Canada. Brothers Paul and Trevor work tirelessly to improve the working lives of all workers, and it is a pleasure to work with them. While it is sad to see Sharon Prescott leave, we wish her well on her much-deserved retirement, and we welcome aboard Kiran Kooner as her replacement.

Meena and I want to thank Sisters Barb Dafoe and Allison Hill. Without them, our jobs would be extremely difficult. They ensure that the BCRO is run like a well-oiled machine. They ensure that there is order and that deadlines are met.

It is a pleasure to work with our Regional Director Meena Brisard. She has been a great support in helping me get my feet wet and I look forward to working with her along with the challenges we will be facing together this year.

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

Respectfully submitted:

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A/Regional Director BC
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