

A stylized illustration of a mountain range and a body of water. The mountains are rendered in various shades of blue and dark blue, with white outlines representing snow or rocky peaks. The water is a light blue color. The sky is a gradient from yellow at the top to light blue at the bottom. The overall style is graphic and modern.

Your Strong Community

Prepared by
CUPE British Columbia
MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE

Introduction

This booklet was produced with the hope that it would become a useful tool for both members and activists on the relationship of the important work we do, and how that work relates directly to our communities.

Various sections in the booklet provide tips and insight on what could be done, sometimes what should be done, and sometimes, how it might be achieved.

Your Strong Community is a snapshot of the kinds of information available. Please follow the links and/or telephone numbers to get more detailed information.

The Municipal Committee members would like to thank the previous committee for their work on the first edition. We hope this updated booklet will be a useful tool for members and locals.

In unity,

Mike Jackson
Chair – Municipal Committee



Municipal Committee Members

Mike Jackson (*Chair*)

CUPE Local 1004

Darryl Clark, CUPE Local 374

Trevor Davies, CUPE Local 374

Blaine Gurrie, CUPE Local 401

Lorena Harrison, CUPE Local 900

Robert Leclerc, CUPE Local 1050

Dan MacBeth, CUPE Local 50

Louise Piper, CUPE Local 458

Jean Poole, CUPE Local 2087

David Scott, CUPE Local 1136

Staff Advisors:

Joe Badali, CUPE National Representative

Blair Redlin, CUPE National Research

Janet Szliske, CUPE National Communications

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INVESTING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

What is a community? A community is made up of people living in a particular geographic area. What is your community? It is a place where you live and breathe. It is a place where you raise a family. It is the place you call home. Like most people, your community is very important to you and the health and strength of your community is critically important to you, and to the lives of everyone who lives within your community.

Whether you are a CUPE member, a small business person, an administrator, a cashier, a labourer or a hairdresser, it really doesn't matter... your community and what happens in your community affects everyone who lives there. The economy of your community, indeed of everyone's community, is essential; but a community is more than just an economic body, it is the way we deal with issues, it is the way we deal with ourselves; it is the way we treat each other as human beings; it is the way we conduct our lives.

Most of us care about poverty and homelessness. And we care because the poor and the homeless are our neighbours and they are

members of our community. And it is feasible, that one day, perhaps we, or someone we know, could become one of the poor and one of the homeless.

Support your local economy – shift your spending

What's the best way to bring back vibrant and sustainable local economies? We've seen over the last decade or so that provincial and federal governments don't seem to have the answers. And local governments just don't have the financial resources to make the kinds of investments that might make a difference.

But imagine the difference that could be made if citizens all over the province made the conscious decision to shift ten per cent of their household spending to local goods and services and locally owned businesses. In other jurisdictions where the Shift has been tried, studies have shown enormous financial benefits to local businesses and job creation. One study in a Michigan county with roughly the same population as the Capital Regional District near Victoria showed that the shift could inject as much as \$840 million per year and create up to 1600 new jobs.

It wasn't so long ago that buying local was the norm. People bought their meat from a local butcher, their kids' sports equipment from the local sporting goods store, and there was a real sense of community between business owners and their customers. If enough people take the Ten Percent Shift pledge and start using their individual purchasing power to support local businesses, we'll build a huge demand that will encourage a new generation of entrepreneurs. And that will create good local jobs, and a secure source of revenue for communities.

Why Shift?

Communities all over British Columbia have been feeling the sting of the after-effects of the worldwide economic collapse for a couple of years now, and resource-dependent communities in particular have experienced severe economic decline for more than a decade. As jobs disappear, families are forced to move elsewhere to find work. And as the tax base of the community declines, local governments are forced into a false dichotomy: raise taxes or cut important public services.

We think there's a better way, and that's the Ten Percent Shift. Think about the possibilities. If a few people got together – a few neighbours, say – and started to shift just ten per cent of their household expenditures to purchases of local goods and services, the local economy will benefit, even if by just a little bit. If enough of us talk to our friends and family about the concept, it could make a big difference.

No one is suggesting that we “go back to the old days,” but some aspects of the past are worth bringing back. And we think a vibrant local economy is one of those things. And while the Ten Percent Shift won't turn things around on its own, it's at least a step in the right direction.

Not only does the Shift benefit local businesses and the local economy, but you'll also be able to find fresher, healthier food, and quality manufacturing.

PLEDGE TO SHIFT

www.tenpercentshift.ca

Take the Pledge, and then “like” the Ten Percent Shift Facebook page and tell your friends about the Shift.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING COALITIONS & NETWORKING

What is a coalition? It is an alliance of people, groups, parties or nations. It is a group of equal partners with each partner bringing something to the coalition. A coalition is the state of being combined into one body. It is important that unions understand when to lead and when to support the lead of other organizations.

What is a network? It is communication with a group; it is an intricately connected system of things or people. Networking means building a system of people that have the same or similar ideals, objectives and goals.

To win positive changes that we need in our workplaces, we need to build strong coalitions with individuals and organizations. We need to make sure that our coalitions are diverse and effective. And when our societies are strong, diverse, and effective we can defeat legislation, bad public policy and other changes that hurt working families. Our whole community benefits.

Building community campaigns often involves understanding and respecting other organizations' issues and priorities, then finding ways to collaborate on those issues and campaigns that will mutually benefit all organizations involved.

How to build a network

- get to know people in your work area, plant or office, and different organizations such as church groups; politicians; other unions; women, environmental and service groups; teachers and seniors' organizations ... these are the people and organizations who will help you with your activity or event;
- make a list of groups that may support your campaign and/or event(s);
- ask to speak to different organizational groups and go prepared with literature, and last but not least, be polite and respectful. Always follow up with a call or letter to thank the organization.

Getting started

- decide on the campaign, action or event;
- organize your checklist, i.e. define issues, get the facts, ask how your community will be affected, know the objective and recruit people;
- create areas of responsibilities, such as overall co-ordinator, lobbying co-ordinator, media spokesperson, political liaison, union/community communications;
- have on-the-job, and telephone canvassers.

Campaign or event materials

- leaflets, fact sheets;
- background information, posters, flyers and buttons;
- petition forms, briefs and policies.

Networking

- contact all potential supporting groups personally, with a follow-up phone call or letter;
- concentrate on obvious allies;
- keep records of all contacts.

Activity

- chart a time-line;
- choose a location, arrange for speakers, invite media;
- keep speeches short;
- ensure equipment is in good working order.

Lobbying

- list politicians you can reach who may affect decisions;
- prepare standard questions;
- make appointments, take background material and give the issue a human face.

Media

- contact media, keep them informed and supply background material;
- be prepared for interviews.

Organizing Skills

- make sure the issue is identified and clear to everyone;
- understand the goals of the campaign or event and study the objectives and how those objectives will reach the community.

People

- to obtain the end result, you will need people;
- have council members on board, talk to local union leadership and community groups;
- communicate with neighbours.

Form a Coalition Committee

- comprised of some of the above-noted groups;
- after the event or action, express thanks and appreciation, you might need them again;
- evaluate and review the work, good and bad;
- learn for the future.

Define the Issue

- educate the people interested;
- understand how it will affect your community;
- understand the economics, i.e. will jobs be taken out of the community?
- loss of jobs in a community equates to loss of economy to your community;

- what are the human consequences, i.e. loss of jobs, loss of family stability, loss of social needs.

Setting Objectives

- set realistic objectives;
- if objectives are not achievable, you may lose your volunteers.

Recruiting People

Keep reasons in mind when asking others to volunteer, such as:

- are they personally affected by the issue;
- feel compassion for others who are affected;
- need to feel a part of the group with whom they identify, etc.

Campaign Strategy

Consider the following:

- how to get union members involved in the campaign;
- how to find allies in the community;
- how to organize events and develop a media strategy.

Launching the Community Campaign

- few people in your community will be interested in a campaign that does not seem relevant to them;
- promote campaign so that it seems close to home.

Organizing a Public Event

- the best way to start your campaign/goal, is to make sure it is widely publicized and well-attended;
- organize follow-up activities and events;
- don't be conservative when advertising the event;
- make sure that the location is convenient, accessible and well known.

GET ELECTED

CUPE, as a union, has a lot at stake in community elections. As public employees, our elected community leaders employ us, and their decisions affect our working lives daily. As public employees, our political action means not only controlling our own destiny, but ensuring the communities we live and work in are places where we want our families, friends and neighbours to live and thrive.

In the 2008 community elections, 22 CUPE members and staff were elected to local government – members just like you, who are local union presidents and activists.

Becoming a candidate for public office can be a rewarding and satisfying experience. If you think you might be interested, talk to a member of the CUPE BC Political Action committee and think about asking your local about training opportunities at Naramata and at the CUPE BC Political Action Conference this June. Our communities need progressive local politicians.

You can make a difference.

*For further information, please contact
www.cupe.bc.ca*

TRADE AGREEMENTS AND HOW THEY AFFECT COMMUNITIES

A Free Trade Agreement is a treaty signed between two or more governments that strengthens rights for investors and reduces the ability of elected governments to act on behalf of citizens in the areas of trade, investment, and labour mobility.

TILMA by another name: The New West Economic Partnership

In April 2006, the governments of British Columbia and Alberta signed the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA). Promoters of this agreement say it was meant to eliminate economic 'barriers' between the two provinces, although no meaningful barriers have ever been identified.

TILMA's aim is also to "harmonize" standards and regulations between the two provinces, which means that British Columbia is not allowed to maintain or establish regulations which exceed those in Alberta. TILMA restricts and reduces municipal autonomy. The rights

of local government to develop important health and safety, environmental or labour policies are under constant threat of TILMA lawsuits by private businesses which can claim their right to invest has been impeded by those policies.

TILMA allows private businesses to sue provincial and local governments under commercial arbitration law and provides for fines of up to \$5 million.

In 2010, Saskatchewan joined the agreement and it was given a new name – the New West Economic Partnership. A new name was needed, because in the last Saskatchewan election, the conservative Premier promised not to join TILMA. His problem was solved by simply changing the name. The New West Partnership has all the same problems and rules as TILMA, so it now means Saskatchewan companies can join Alberta companies in reducing democratic rights for B.C. communities.

CETA – A really big deal between Canada and Europe

The European Union (E.U.) has a bigger population and a bigger economy than the U.S.A., so it's a really big deal that Canada is negotiating

a new trade deal with the E.U. (called CETA). For the first time, the provinces are at the trade deal table directly negotiating areas of provincial and local responsibility. The E.U. has made clear that their top priority is completely unrestricted access to purchasing by all levels of Canadian government – including the municipal, school, health and academic levels. If the E.U. gets what it wants, it means local governments will be unable to steer their purchasing in support of local businesses and local job creation. And, since Europe is home to some of the world's largest companies in sectors like water and health, it means that public services like water are under real threat.

The CETA negotiations are covering a large range of topics, so there is much at risk. For example, proposed changes to drug patent rules would increase already high Canadian pharmaceutical costs by another \$2.8 billion per year. Current medicare protections in NAFTA are under attack and there's a proposal to give European corporations the right to sue Canadian governments at both the national and provincial level for policies the Europeans don't like.

To learn more about what's on the table, go to www.tradejustice.ca

How do trade and investor rights agreements affect your community?

Trade agreements ('Free Trade' Agreements) make it extremely difficult to bring privately-contracted services back in-house or to create new public agencies. This means once a government enters a contract with a private firm, those public jobs and quality services may be lost forever.

Trade agreements have more to do with safeguarding the rights of corporations to make profits than with protecting and improving the lives of working people.

Here are just three reasons why trade and investor rights agreements are not good for your community:

1) They take the ability to make decisions away from local governments.

Trade agreements allow private businesses to sue local governments if they believe regulations or practices create undue restrictions.

This means that private companies now have the right to challenge municipal policies that have been created in response to municipal

needs. In fact, under the New West Partnership, provincial governments can face fines of up to \$5 million if either they, or local governments, make decisions that are deemed to “impair trade.” This is a tremendous blow to the democratic process.

2) They create a “race to the bottom.”

In an effort to harmonize regulations, trade agreements inevitably put downward pressure on standards. As regulations are challenged by private businesses, they move closer and closer to the lowest standards between the participating governments. To attract investment dollars, governments also refrain from introducing new programs or regulations, even if they are demanded by citizens. The end result is that governments compete with each other to provide the lowest cost business climate and the concerns and needs of citizens and residents are discounted.

3) They affect public services.

Trade agreements significantly affect a government's ability to provide public services. Canada's public service is continually under threat of a challenge under agreements like NAFTA. Now the New West Partnership (and potentially CETA) make it harder for provincial

and municipal governments to prevent the entry of private firms into the health and social services sectors. Privatized services cost more, provide lower quality service and reduce the number of jobs available in a community.

What can you do to help your municipality?

You can contact your members of Council and ask them to oppose Free Trade Agreements (like the proposed Canada/E.U. deal) and help strengthen the ability of municipal governments to protect the rights and needs of residents. You can contact your MLA and give him/her the same message. You can join in coalition with others in your community who share your concern about democracy.

NEW & YOUNG WORKERS

What is a “young worker” and how many are there?

WorkSafe BC, British Columbia’s Workers’ Compensation Board, classifies a young worker as someone between the ages of 15 and 24. In 2008 there were more than 360,000 young workers in B.C.

How frequently are young workers hurt on the job?

Young workers are hurt more often than any other age category: every day, 46 young workers are injured. Every week, three of these young workers are permanently injured. In 2007, six were killed in work-related accidents.

Are young workers injured more often than older workers are?

Yes. Young workers are at a much higher risk of injury than workers of any other age group. Young males under the age of twenty-five (25) are at the highest risk for a workplace injury in B.C.; 75% of young workers’ claims are for young men. The injury rate of young male workers is about 74% higher than the overall injury rate in B.C. This means one out of every 20 working young males in B.C. is hurt on the job.

Young women are injured on the job much less, but still, one in 63 was injured on the job last year. One reason for the difference is that men are often employed in higher risk jobs and tend to work more hours per week than young women.

When are young workers at risk?

Every day, but they are most at risk in the first year of employment. More than half of serious injuries and fatalities involving workers aged 15 – 24 occur during the first six months on the job; almost 20% occur during the first month on the job.

Why are young workers getting injured on the job?

According to a WorkSafeBC study on attitudes towards workplace injury, young workers are injured more than older workers because they:

- are inexperienced and lack proper training;
- lack understanding of their rights as workers;
- lack appropriate preparation for the workplace;
- are asked to do more dangerous jobs;
- have sense of youthful invincibility; and
- are unwilling or hesitant to ask questions of supervisors.

Although young workers might feel invincible, most injuries are preventable with a little investment in training, proper supervision and healthy working environments.

Who is responsible for young worker safety?

Everyone has a stake in promoting a safe and healthy work environment for every employee. Young workers are the future of our labour movement. With one in four CUPE members retiring in the next five years, everyone must ensure that workplaces are accessible and healthy for future workers. Employers, supervisors, unions, educators, parents, community groups, and young workers share this responsibility.

What are the most effective ways to prevent young worker injuries?

WorkSafeBC research reaffirms the old adage, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” To prevent injuries among young workers employers can:

- train and orient workers to new worksites and new jobs;
- provide health and safety training for supervisors;
- establish peer-to-peer training programs for young workers;

- provide education for workers, parents, and employers on accidents and the rights and responsibilities concerning workplace health and safety;
- report unsafe working conditions when and wherever they occur.

Support for new and young workers

As Baby Boomers retire, the demographics of our workplaces and our union is rapidly changing. Reaching out and including young workers in our union will make us all stronger. One possibility is to create a young worker executive position on your local's executive board. It's a great way to give your executive insight into young workers' needs and thoughts within your local.

WorkSafe BC Resources

The Prevention Information Line at **(604) 276-3100** or toll-free in B.C. at **1 888 621-SAFE (7233)** provides information on safety and health, and allows individuals to report concerns anonymously.

The Raise Your Hand Website is an interactive site that allows young workers to submit personal stories about working and provides information on workers' rights and the latest health and safety information. The site address is:
www.raiseyourhand.com

WorkSafe BC's Young Worker Health and Safety Website includes a broad range of information on preventing and reporting workplace injuries directed to youth, parents, educators and employers. The site address is:
<http://www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/YoungWorker/Home.asp>

WORKERS' RIGHTS

Right to Know – hazards of the job; procedures training (job specific); violence procedures; emergency procedures; who to go to for first aid; employer must post minutes of meetings, inspections, violations and first aid incidents, etc.

Right to Participate – committees; inspections; meetings i.e. participation when a WCB officer attends worksite for inspection (this is the law).

Right to Refuse – if a worker has reasonable cause to believe that to carry out any work process would create an undue hazard to the health and safety of any person, s/he has the right to refuse to take such action. The Occupational Health & Safety Regulation contains legal requirements that must be met by all workplaces under the inspection jurisdiction of WorkSafeBC.

Many sections of the Regulation have associated guidelines and policies. For further information, go to:

<http://www2.worksafebc.com/publications/OHSRegulation/Home.asp>

SAFETY ON THE JOB/ RESPONSIBILITIES

“Safety on the job is everyone’s business”

Worker Responsibilities

- know and follow health and safety requirements affecting your job;
- if you don’t know how to do something safely, ask for training before you begin work;
- work safely, and encourage your co-workers to do the same;
- correct any unsafe conditions or immediately report them to your supervisor;
- immediately report any injury to a first aid attendant or supervisor;
- take the initiative; make suggestions to improve health and safety.

Employer Responsibilities

- provide a safe and healthy workplace;
- ensure that workers are adequately trained;
- keep written records of training (who, what, when);
- establish and maintain a comprehensive occupational health and safety program, including a written health and safety policy and an incident investigation procedure;
- support supervisors, safety co-ordinators and workers in their health and safety activities;
- take action immediately when a worker or supervisor tells you about a potentially hazardous situation;
- initiate an immediate investigation into incidents;
- report serious incidents to WorkSafeBC;
- provide adequate first aid facilities & services;
- provide personal protective equipment where required.

Supervisor Responsibilities

- instruct workers in safe work procedures;
- train workers for all tasks assigned to them and check that their work is being done safely;
- ensure that only authorized, adequately-trained workers operate tools and equipment or use hazardous chemicals;
- ensure that equipment and materials are properly handled, stored, and maintained;
- enforce health and safety requirements;
- correct unsafe acts and conditions;
- identify workers with problems that could affect safety at the worksite and follow up with interviews and referrals where necessary;
- formulate health and safety rules and inspect the workplace for hazards.

WCB: WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD

WorkSafe BC administers the Workers' Compensation Act for the BC Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services. The Act gives WorkSafe BC legal authority to:

- set and enforce occupational health and safety standards;
- assist injured or disabled workers and their dependants;
- assess employers and collect funds to operate WorkSafeBC.

The Workers' Compensation Board is complex and there are many organizations and associations that work alongside WorkSafeBC to promote workplace health and safety and return-to-work programs for injured workers.

If you require more information on any subject relating to WCB, you may phone WorkSafe BC Prevention Information: **604-276-3100** or toll-free **1-888-621-SAFE (7233)**.

For further information:

<http://www.worksafebc.com/links/default.asp>

CONTRACTING OUT

Contracting out means that the services offered and work performed by the members of your bargaining unit, are performed by contracted workers or companies who are not covered by your Collective Agreement. This is another form of privatization – taking away the direct relationship between a municipality or board of education and its workers.

The bottom line for a contractor, is profit. The bottom line for a public service worker is service.

For further information on CUPE BC's *Contracting In the "7-Step" Quick Reference Guide* and the *Anti-Contracting Out "3-Step" Local Executive Guide*, go to www.cupe.bc.ca or call CUPE BC at **1-604-291-9119**.

More information is also available at www.cupe.ca/privatization

PRIVATIZATION

As public sector workers, CUPE members understand how important the services we provide are to our communities. And we also see many of our employers – whether they be a local government, a board of education or university – looking at the possibility of privatizing these services.

Our employers are too often taken in by arguments that privatizing services will be more efficient, will save money and will be more innovative. Despite this, there is growing evidence that privatizing services actually costs more in the long run and provides less service to the public.

Proposals to privatize services include contracting out a service to private companies or individuals, and entering into complex public-private partnership arrangements.

As frontline workers providing public services, CUPE members are well placed to stop privatization before it starts.

In every community and local, CUPE members are the eyes and ears that detect the early warning signs of privatization in all its forms.

What does P3 or public-private partnership mean?

A public-private partnership (P3) is a form of privatization. P3s are multi-decade contracts for private management of public services (school maintenance, grounds keeping, hospital cleaning) or infrastructure (water and sewage services, power production).

P3s can include private financing, ownership and/or operation. They result in higher costs, lower quality and loss of public control.

P3s often involve big corporations with no links to the community.

In B.C., we have a number of P3 projects under way, including the the South Okanagan Events Centre in Penticton. The Port Mann Bridge began as a P3 but private financing collapsed, and it will now be built with public funding!

CUPE, working with allies, has helped to stop proposed P3 projects including the Kamloops Centre for Water Quality, the Whistler Sewage System Upgrade, and the Seymour Water Filtration project in the Lower Mainland.

For further information, please see

www.cupe.bc.ca

www.cupe.ca

www.canadians.org/

COUNCIL and SCHOOL BOARD WATCH

Do you have a member of your local who would be interested in following what your council, school board or other elected leaders do? Knowing the plans and actions of your various elected bodies is vital when trying to keep abreast of the big picture in your community.

Examples: is there talk about upgrading your recreation centre? Is there a possibility of a new arena under discussion? Are you losing trades jobs to outside contractors? Is there talk of privatizing municipal water? Is there talk of cutting down the janitorial services in your school? These are public service jobs and should remain in the public domain.

By actively following what happens at public meetings, you can hear about things when there's still time to take action and have an affect on the outcome.

If you would like to know more or get a copy of the Council and School Board Watch package, please contact CUPE BC at www.cupe.bc.ca or call **604-291-9119**.

CITY WATCH

City Watch is a CUPE-sponsored program designed to prevent and reduce crime in communities throughout British Columbia. CUPE locals work together with local government and police, to give outside CUPE workers and their dispatchers special training in watching for, and reporting criminal or suspicious activity that they see, while on the job.

When at work, CUPE workers keep their eyes and ears open and help prevent crime and accidents in B.C. communities.

City Watch gives us the opportunity of helping to make our communities safe and secure, including our own families and those of others.

For further information, please contact CUPE BC at www.cupe.bc.ca or phone **604-291-9119**.

GREEN JOBS: THE ENVIRONMENT AFFECTS EVERYONE

Is climate change a union issue? YES.

Why? Because it is real and it could affect you and your job. Anything that affects you and your job will affect your family and your lifestyle.

Want to take action? Here are some things you can do at work. Insist your employer **set up a waste reduction program** that will:

- **assess** waste generation at your workplace to see where changes need to be made;
- **create solutions** which can include guidelines for using fewer resources to generate less waste such as a program that cuts the use of disposable products/materials to a minimum.

Other programs could include:

- recycling programs;
- reusing programs such as donating materials so that they don't end up in your landfill;
- composting programs for food waste.

Educate yourself and other members so that the solutions work; if you educate people, they will participate. Monitor the solutions to confirm that they are working.

Negotiate environment-friendly measures into collective agreements:

- for example, you could negotiate an environment committee for your workplace as part of your collective agreement;
- your collective agreement could also include a Workplace Recycling Program clause.

Speak up at work, within your union, at home and in your community about climate change;

- tell people why climate change must be dealt with right away;
- let them know what actions they can take and how they can help.

Initiate a conservation program at work to start cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) immediately. For example, turn off unnecessary equipment, turn off the lights, don't idle your car, truck or vehicle (this will reduce CO₂ emissions while

working.) Form a committee of like-minded people to raise awareness and initiate change.

Get involved and participate in special days and events that promote environmental awareness and action:

- Clean Air Day is in early June. For info go to www.cleanairday.com;
- CUPE'S Earth Day poster contest - encourage children to participate in the poster contest, more details at www.cupe.ca

CUPE has published information on climate change. Go to:

www.cupe.ca/environment/enviroguide

For additional information also visit:

www.davidsuzuki.org

www.canadianlabour.ca/en/health_safety_envir

www.cen-rce.org

www.ipcc.ch

www.pembina.org

www.climatesolutions.org

www.toxicfreecanada.ca

www.canadians.org



Municipal Committee
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