



# ENVIR ACTION

APRIL 2018

CUPE's Environmental  
Newsletter

## EARTH DAY 2018

# Nominate your local as one of CUPE's greenest!

CUPE's National Environment Committee wants to profile some of the positive environmental steps CUPE locals are taking in our workplaces. This is a chance to promote all workplace initiatives that help clean up our communities, cut greenhouse gases, save energy, conserve water, or reduce waste.

Here are some steps that qualify as good green actions your local can take:

- Promoting and using public transit, carpooling, biking and/or walking to work.
- Recycling and/or composting at your workplace.
- Having an active workplace environment committee or green champion.
- Bargaining green language.
- Working with community partners on Earth Day events or other environmental projects.

**CUPE wants to hear from locals on all the environmental steps you are taking – big and small.**

Simply submit your 200-word story, and include your name, local and province, to [enviro@cupe.ca](mailto:enviro@cupe.ca). Winners will be profiled on the CUPE National website. Please send us photographs of your initiative and improve your chances of winning.

**Earth Day is April 22, 2018.**

**The contest deadline is May 11th, 2018.**

### Want more ideas?

Don't have an environment committee or green language at your CUPE local? No problem. Ideas are available at [cupe.ca/environment](http://cupe.ca/environment)

### Here are some actions taken by recent winners of the CUPE Earth Day contest:

- CUPE 4400, Toronto Education Workers, won in 2017 for developing an urban/workplace farming initiative to help promote local food consumption while cutting greenhouse gases.
- CUPE 606 in British Columbia won the 2016 contest for their ongoing involvement with Bike to Work events in their community. CUPE 606 represents school board workers in District 68 in Nanaimo and Ladysmith.
- CUPE 6079 of the Hospital Employees Union (HEU) won the contest in 2015, for their efforts to set up a workplace environment committee. They also put in place an extensive recycling and waste diversion program.

# CUPE present at FCM's Sustainable Communities Conference

CUPE had a strong presence at the 2018 Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Sustainable Communities Conference held in Ottawa in early February. CUPE representatives participated in a variety of workshops and discussions and hosted an information booth. The conference was a good opportunity for CUPE to meet with stakeholders from municipalities across Canada and learn from innovative speakers.



## Municipalities and climate adaptation

Climate change adaptation was one of the many topics discussed at the conference. Adaptation means altering our cities and towns in response to the current and anticipated effects of climate change from, for example, flooding, drought and heatwaves. Municipal leaders pointed to the need to make communities more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

One solution is improved urban forestry. It can play a critical role in counteracting destructive climate change impacts. Urban forests absorb water, cool urban spaces, improve air quality, help retain soil, and bolster biodiversity. Trees also improve municipal residents' lives and well-being. Economically, urban forests can also help lower energy costs with their cooling effects, an important consideration as summer temperatures continue to soar. The City of Ottawa runs its urban forestry

program through a "natural systems resiliency planning" lens. Martha Copestake from the City of Ottawa spoke about the need for urban forests to be diverse and complex, making forests more resilient and a bigger aid to climate change adaptation. A variety of species of different ages and sizes, planted in a manner more closely resembling natural forests, is the most helpful.

Ottawa is taking a twenty-year approach to strengthening its urban forests, which can be good for job growth - planting, maintaining and augmenting forests requires skilled workers. This could be an opportunity to bring more jobs back in house for CUPE municipal workers who specialize in forestry and gardening.

## Affordable housing going green

A session on Green Affordable Housing made links between the work being done to repair and retrofit Canada's aging affordable housing stock and the government's financial incentives for sustainable development in the housing sector. According to a voluntary National Household Survey, there are at least 35,000 affordable housing units in need of significant repair in Canada, and the problem is growing. The poor condition of our housing stock is a serious problem for energy efficiency and sustainability.

To address this problem, organizations like Salus Ottawa and Niagara Regional Housing are engaged in initiatives to reduce energy consumption by using innovative materials and technologies. Since incorporating geothermal heating into some of its stock, Niagara Regional Housing has seen a 57 per cent reduction in hydro costs. With high-efficiency construction materials, Salus Ottawa has reduced the cost of heating a single unit of its social housing to an incredible \$29 per year.