

1375, boul. St. Laurent Blvd., Ottawa, ON K1G 0Z7

Tel./Tél. : (613) 237-1590 Fax/Télec. : (613) 237-5508 Toll free/Sans frais : (844) 237-1590

cupemail@cupe.ca/courriel@scfp.ca – cupe.ca/scfp.ca

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT DECEMBER 2017 – MARCH 2018

Sisters, Brothers and Friends:

Once again, we began our new year meeting with staff across the country. This was an opportunity to discuss the priorities established by our 2017 National Convention and our plans to implement them.

We discussed the bold and substantial programs contained in Strategic Directions and our new organizing plan, and the importance of integrating these into the work of our union. Because convention sent an ambitious agenda for our union, and we cannot get that work done without every level of our union doing their part.

We also discussed the various challenges our members and locals are encountering in the face of government austerity agendas, public sector funding cuts, and obstinate employers.

As always, I appreciated the opportunity to engage with staff on these and other conversations about our collective efforts and common goals. Their dedication to and support for our members and our union is key to the work that lies ahead.

At our first two division conventions, in Saskatoon and Grande Prairie, we had fruitful conversations with our members about another priority established by National Convention – the Task Force on Governance. I look forward to similar discussions at the remaining division conventions throughout the spring.

National Committees

As is our tradition in the year following our national conventions, our newly-appointed National Committees gathered in Ottawa for their first meetings of their term – including our newest, the National Transportation Committee.

MARK HANCOCK

National President/Président national

CHARLES FLEURY

National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorier national

DENIS BOLDOC, FRED HAHN, JUDY HENLEY, DANIEL LÉGÈRE, MARLE ROBERTS

General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

Our committees reviewed their terms of reference, along with Strategic Directions and resolutions adopted by our National Convention. Together, these provided guidance in the development of their committee workplans.

Members also listened to columnist and author Linda McQuaig speak about the Canadian political landscape, and joined members of Local 2424 on the picket line at Carleton University.

Legislative Update

On February 27, Finance Minister Morneau released the 2018 federal budget.

Cloaked in progressive language and focussed on gender equality and Indigenous reconciliation, there are some positive moves.

After two years of inaction, there is a significant commitment (\$5 billion over five years) to programs aimed at improving the lives of Indigenous peoples, including \$1.4 billion over five years for First Nations child and family services to comply with the Canada Human Rights Tribunal decision. Additional funding for housing and improving access to clean drinking water is welcome, but in all cases, falls below what is needed to close the gap for Indigenous peoples in Canada.

After 14 years of inaction – a Pay Equity Task Force recommended proactive legislation in 2004 – it was good to finally see a commitment on pay equity legislation contained in the budget. Unfortunately, the budget contained no funding for actual pay equity implementation.

Other measures aimed at gender equality include second parent leave, increased funding for women's organizations, and measures to address violence against women – including an amendment to the Canada Labour Code to provide five days of paid leave for survivors of domestic violence.

For a so-called gender equality budget, it was disappointing to see virtually no new supports for child care – especially because there is clear evidence that access to safe and affordable child care is key to improving women's economic equality.

For years, CUPE has been calling on the government to establish a universal pharmacare program to assist the millions of Canadians who don't have prescription drug coverage. And the Liberal government had signaled before the budget that they were going to move in that direction.

Unfortunately, the commitment was far less than we had hoped – an advisory council to consult and “begin a national dialogue”, but there's no timeline and no funding set aside for this work.

On the revenue side of the equation, the budget was a lost opportunity to pursue tax fairness. There was no move by the government to crack down on tax havens, close CEO stock option loopholes, and require international digital corporations like Uber and Facebook to collect and remit sales tax like any other business.

It was also shocking to see that the government will lose \$2.1 billion in revenues over four years from tariffs foregone as a result of signing the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

On January 17, Unifor's National Executive Board made the decision to leave the Canadian Labour Congress. That same week, they commenced a raid on UNITE HERE Local 75 at 24 hotel properties in Toronto.

Unifor's decision sent a shockwave through the Canadian labour movement.

Your National Executive Board has been addressing the fallout of Unifor's decision, from its potential impact on CUPE to the impact on federations of labour and labour councils.

We recognize that this has weakened our labour movement, and damaged union solidarity across Canada.

One of the consequences of their decision is that Unifor members have lost their right, under the CLC Constitution, to participate in the CLC, its federations of labour, and its labour councils. Which means our movement is losing the energy and talent of so many incredible Unifor activists on the ground.

Another consequence is that we are now working to protect existing union members against raiding by Unifor, rather than spending our resources organizing workers who do not already have the benefit of a union.

Unifor's departure has created a bit of a vacuum in our labour movement, and as Canada's largest union, it is our responsibility to step up. We are asking our Local Unions to affiliate to and participate in their labour councils and federations of labour. We have to do everything we can to strengthen our movement and restore union solidarity in this country.

We know that our movement is strongest when it is united.

And keeping our house of labour united remains a top priority for me as your national president.

Collective Bargaining/Strikes/Lockouts

There are three new disputes involving job action in this reporting period.

| PROVINCE | LOCAL | EMPLOYER | # OF MEMBERS | STRIKE BEGAN | DURATION (days) |
|-----------------|--------------|---|---------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Quebec | 5317 | Viterra - Port of Montréal | 51 | January 30, 2018 Locked Out | On-going |
| Ontario | 2424 | Carleton University - Professional Services Staff | 903 | March 5, 2018 | On-going |
| Ontario | 3903 | York University – Academic Staff | 2,717 | March 5, 2018 | On-going |

Local 5317 – Viterra at The Port of Montréal – Quebec

Viterra, one of the main grain marketer/handlers at the Port of Montréal, locked out 51 members on Tuesday, January 30, at 7 a.m. The members are seeking equity with other Port of Montréal workers represented by CUPE.

Negotiations have stalled over two matters – wages and scheduling. Since the lockout began, CUPE has settled two other collective agreements with Port employers that addresses salary inequities and work scheduling. This employer remains steadfast in their position not to address any of Local 5317 issues.

Local 2424 – Carleton University Professional Services Staff – Ontario

Members of Local 2424 walked off the job on March 5 fighting back against concessions. The employer, Carleton University, is proposing to remove from their collective agreement language that allows the local the right to negotiate around pensions. The insistence of the employer to remove this provision certainly means that the employer wishes to make unilateral changes to the pension plan which would likely include a move to a defined contribution plan.

The local has filed a bargaining in bad faith complaint. Carleton has misrepresented and mischaracterized its own position and the union's, including the issues that led to prolonging the strike and preventing the kind of negotiations that are needed to resolve the dispute. Despite claims by Carleton's president, the university had not made any request to CUPE, verbal or written, to return to the bargaining table.

The local is ready to work creatively and collaboratively with Carleton to end the strike. But their determination to keep the rights and protections around pensions doesn't give the university's administration permission to mislead Carleton's workers or the public.

Local 3903 – York University Academic Staff – Ontario

For the third time in the last ten years, academic workers at York University are out on a picket line. Local 3903 represents academic workers in three units – Teaching Assistant Unit; Contract Faculty Unit; and the Research and Graduate Assistant Unit. Rather than find a solution to the issues, York University negotiators have been absent during the days leading up to the strike and since the strike began. They have refused to enter into any meaningful dialogue with Local 3903.

After six months of fruitless bargaining, members took to the picket lines on March 5 in support of their demands for less precarious employment and less of a university system that is far too reliant on short-term, precarious work with little to no stability or predictability.

York University has chosen to needlessly prolong this dispute by not sitting down and doing the work necessary to resolve the outstanding issues. Local 3903's bargaining team continues to be ready and available to resume negotiations as soon as there is a willing partner across the table.

Regional Services Division Updates

ATLANTIC REGION

Newfoundland and Labrador

Our members in Newfoundland and Labrador are at the forefront in a very difficult round of master bargaining with the government. They are fighting concessions in a tough political climate. To support the bargaining team, CUPE mounted campaigns to counter the government's narrative and show how the austerity agenda was hurting Newfoundland and Labrador's economy: "Dwight Ball's Crossroads" focused on the Liberal's failure to protect good jobs in the province, and how public services stabilize the economy. More recently, in December, a media campaign illustrated the importance of not giving into concession bargaining because wage losses hurt the economy as a whole. Communicating in this way with the public at large strengthened our position at the bargaining table, despite the hostile context our members are facing with this Liberal government.

This year, many municipal locals will be proceeding to the bargaining table as well, including Local 569 (St. John's), Local 2099 (Mount Pearl), and Local 3034 (Conception Bay South). The efforts aimed at moving the conversation in the province away from austerity will also help us gain ground in the municipal sector.

Local 879 achieved a significant gain when the employer (Eastern Health) accepted, as it reviewed its attendance management program, to no longer require a medical note for members to qualify for sick leave. We have long argued that it is counterproductive for the government to require employees to clog up the health care system in order to receive their pay. Hopefully, more and more employers will come to the same conclusion.

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia will dissolve the province's regional school boards this spring, under legislation introduced on March 1st by the Liberal government. The *Education Reform Act* is an omnibus bill that, among other things, will see the creation of two school boards to replace the current ones: one for English language schools and one for French schools, as represented by the *Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial* (CSAP).

Last fall, the McNeil government hired a consultant, Avis Glaze, to conduct a review of the current education sector structure in Nova Scotia. CUPE participated in the public consultations, stressing that regional school boards are a vital local connection between communities and their schools. Dr. Glaze's report, tabled on January 22, did not address our concerns at all. It recommends, among other things, eliminating the eight currently existing school boards and replacing them with one French board and one English board. Without reaching out to stakeholders such as CUPE and NSTU, the McNeil government announced that it accepted the spirit of all 22 recommendations and was going to implement the first half right away. These included the plan to get rid of regional school boards, exclude school administrators from the NSTU and create a professional association for them, and establish a professional regulatory teachers' college.

CUPE school board staff is directly affected but we are left in the dark with respect to how this will unfold. This restructuring will create an unstable environment that will negatively impact the quality of education. The teachers, who already have had their working conditions imposed by legislation last year, gave their union a mandate to take illegal strike action in response.

Again, the McNeil government failed to work collaboratively with unions, creating uncertainty and unrest when things could have been dealt with in a much more comprehensive way. CUPE Nova Scotia is prepared to mobilize, rally, denounce, and work with allies, parents, and community to respond to this plan in order to defend school board staff and the quality education that our children deserve.

If it wasn't for the uncertainty created by this ill-advised plan, we would be happy to celebrate the agreement reached between Local 5047 and the Halifax Regional School Board in February. The new contract addresses important issues related to staffing and lay off protection.

After getting a strong strike mandate from support staff at Cape Breton University at the end of January, Local 3131 reached a tentative agreement with the assistance of a conciliation officer.

MARITIMES REGION

New Brunswick

CUPE New Brunswick is getting ready to strengthen members' bargaining power by increasing opportunities for coordinated bargaining focused on real wage increases. After years of austerity, it's time for New Brunswick to catch up and bump up wages to boost the economy.

The momentum is there: the provincial government is coming to realize that a reinvestment in public services is needed, as the budget tabled by Finance Minister Rogers showed. The sluggish provincial economy will be stimulated by key public-sector investment hikes in Health and Education.

CUPE New Brunswick applauded the government's announcement that it would provide free child care for low income families and raise salaries of early-learning and childcare workers. It is a step in the right direction. But it is still not enough. Working families are basically excluded from the program because the revenue threshold is very low. CUPE has been advocating for universal, affordable, not-for-profit high-quality child care, delivered by unionized workers, and will continue to do so.

CUPE New Brunswick also challenged the government to immediately raise front line wages in home care and community care services to \$15 an hour, and pay adequate mileage compensation to care workers driving to meet their clients. It is totally unacceptable that Local 4598's collective agreement has been expired for nine years and the underfunded employer, the Red Cross, has refused to negotiate a fair contract for its most devoted employees. Services have declined over the years, with personnel retention problems and unacceptable delays. The solution would be to make home care a public service, where management would be accountable.

Speaking of accountability, the snowstorm that hit New Brunswick at the start of the new year gave citizens a clear picture of the difficulties plaguing the province's snow removal program. Local 1190, representing highway workers, shed light on the major issues that need attention from government, including the fact that over 80 operator positions and 40 plows have been eliminated since 2012. A press conference was held with Local 4848 paramedics and Local 1253 school bus drivers, to urge the transportation minister to overhaul the Winter Maintenance Program.

Prince Edward Island

After years of lobbying by CUPE Prince Edward Island and Local 2523, the government finally announced in late December 2017 that regulations under the *Community Care Facilities and Nursing Homes Act* were being changed to allow LPNs in private nursing homes to administer medications. This was an issue with respect to the LPN's licensing and, with the longstanding effort of everyone involved, our goal has been accomplished.

Another regulatory change to be celebrated: thanks to Local 3324 and the CUPE PEI Occupational Health and Safety Committee, and with the help of the Opposition at the PEI Legislature, a bill was passed to change Workers Compensation legislation to recognize post-traumatic stress disorder as a work-related injury. The legislation includes a presumption that puts the burden of proof on the WCB to demonstrate that a worker with PTSD did not become afflicted while at work, making it easier for claimants to have their injury compensated.

Quebec

Quebec started off the year with a heavy load of negotiations.

Viterra, one of the major grain distributors in the Port of Montréal, locked out its operators, members of Local 5317, while the parties were still engaged in mediation. The Viterra operators were asking for parity with the majority of the other Port of Montréal workers and were also seeking to improve health and safety at work and their work-family balance clauses.

In the municipal sector, several agreements have been reached since the end of 2017.

Local 2055 and the City of Mascouche reached an agreement after more than three years of difficult bargaining. With this agreement, the local was able to avoid interest arbitration imposed by Bill 15 on municipal pension plans, and also agreed to some arrangements that will make it possible to bring back in-house the work that was being contracted out, and providing services to the City's citizens seven days a week.

The City of Laval and Local 4545 reached a new agreement that includes salary increases of 13 per cent over a six-year term, as well as improvements to the working conditions of temporary employees. This round of bargaining was difficult and required a number of targeted days on strike, as well as recourse to conciliation, but the end result was well worth it: the work that was being contracted out will now be given to the blue-collar workers and numerous grievances were likewise settled.

Also, Local 1299 secured a satisfactory agreement with the City of Châteauguay, which provides for good salary increases of more than 20 per cent over eight years. Work schedules were made more flexible and provisions geared towards fostering internal expertise, with the maintenance of minimum staffing levels, were also bargained.

Local 301 reached agreements with the Town of Mount-Royal and Dollard-des-Ormeaux, winning more permanent positions and reducing job precarity.

In Abitibi, agreements were reached with the municipalities of Ville-Marie and Taschereau. Local 4521 succeeded in signing a satisfactory contract very quickly with Taschereau. Local 1966 made a number of gains, namely 2.5 per cent a year salary increases, and higher management contributions to their pension plan.

Notwithstanding the threat of a lockout at TVA Rimouski, negotiations with Québecor concluded with a catch-up salary increase for this group of Local 687 members. And agreements were likewise reached with the Journal de Québec, where the three locals succeeded in keeping 100 per cent of the Journal de Québec production and ensuring quality content in the newspaper. And I'd like to congratulate Locals 1450, 1872, and 2808 for having steadfastly resisted the employer's demands to introduce a two-tier clause regarding the pension plan for new employees.

Ontario

An Ontario arbitrator has ruled that Sue McIntyre, a North Bay Regional Health Centre (NBRHC) nurse and member of Local 139 fired by the hospital after she spoke about workplace violence at a nursing conference and was quoted in a union media release, should get her job back. The arbitrator states that he found McIntyre had “no plan or intention to initiate a media campaign to sully the hospital’s reputation” and is to be “reinstated to her employment without loss of benefits or seniority and with full compensation.”

The arbitrator found that there is “broad acceptance that workplace violence is prevalent in the hospital sector” and that the comments made by nurses in an OCHU media release following the Kingston conference, mirrored concerns expressed in Ontario Hospital Association documents and the New England Journal of Medicine.

The decision comes more than two years after North Bay Regional dismissed McIntyre, one of several nurses who participated in a panel-type discussion at a conference organized by the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU), the hospital division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

The case raised important issues of free speech and the need for protections for workers who blow the whistle on workplace violence. The firing of McIntyre highlighted the climate of fear in the health sector about reporting workplace violence.

In January, the City of Woodstock Council voted to bring new hazardous waste work in-house, hiring four full-time public works employees. Public works department employees, members of Local 1146, led by President Denis LeChasseur, lobbied Council and pointed out the pitfalls of contracting out.

Council had been considering contracting out the work. LeChasseur presented a CUPE research brief that highlighted serious flaws in the contracting process and warned of the dangers of privatizing this core city function.

CUPE's brief emphasizes the importance of the City operating the recycling facility itself. The benefits of public operation include more waste being kept out of landfills and properly processed, better transparency and oversight, and greater flexibility to adapt to new provincial solid waste legislation.

Congratulations to the members of Local 1146.

The report by Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer (FAO) proves that the sale of Hydro One is bad for the province. The report uncovered that though the sale of 53 per cent of the shares in Hydro One brought in \$9.2 billion in one-time cash, that money only improves government revenue until the end of this fiscal year. The loss of the ongoing revenue from the sold off shares, and the end of annual payments-in-lieu of taxes, means that beginning in 2018/19 the government will lose \$1.1 billion in revenue, and that will continue to deteriorate by hundreds of millions more each year from 2019 to 2025. Had the province issued traditional debt to fund an identical amount of infrastructure investment, rather than selling Hydro One, the long-term provincial net debt would be lower within 10 years.

The FAO showed unequivocally that the sale of Hydro One is bad for the people of Ontario. What this report doesn't include is the further devastation the sell-off of Hydro One will have on the people and businesses of this province. The loss of control over the hydro system and the growing need for corporate profits means all Ontarians will be paying for their mistake for years to come. The fight will continue until the hydro system is back under public control.

The 2017 [annual report](#) of Ontario's Auditor General once again points to major problems with privatization and lack of capacity in the health care system. The Auditor General identifies six key problems with Ontario's 16 P3 hospitals.

- There are long-term ongoing disputes with privatized P3 contractors over the P3 agreements, including about what is covered by the P3 contract.
- Hospitals are required to pay higher than reasonable rates to the P3 contractor for maintenance work the contractor has deemed to be outside of the P3 contract.
- P3 companies with poor performance records are still winning contracts. One such company got in on a P3 deal worth \$1.3 billion in 2016 and another worth \$685 million in 2017.

- Hospitals are experiencing funding shortfalls for their P3 maintenance agreement. The total funding shortfall for four of these hospitals was \$8.1 million in 2015/16.
- Two key benefits that hospitals expected from P3 maintenance agreements have not been realized. The expected benefits were that maintenance costs be covered in the monthly P3 payments and that the risk of maintaining the hospitals would be transferred to the private sector. This has not happened on both accounts.
- The P3 “escalating dispute resolution methods” are collectively time-consuming and ineffective at resolving disputes.

Hundreds of long-term care workers from across the province rallied with family members and seniors at Queen’s Park to demand the Liberal government bring the *Time to Care Act* for final reading before the election. Canada has the lowest long-term care levels among countries with equivalent economies, and Ontario has the lowest in Canada. Bill 33 (The *Time to Care Act*) would legislate a minimum care standard of four hours of hands-on care each day.

One week after the rally, Candace Rennick spoke on a panel about CUPE Ontario’s [Time to Care](#) campaign, as an example of unions fighting for quality public services that are so crucial to women’s equality. The panel was part of the annual meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) in New York City.

Manitoba

Health care continues to be the frontline of our battle with the Pallister government, which continues to forge ahead with substantial changes to health care organization and delivery despite a warning from its own Task Force that “rapid implementation” of these changes will “place a major stress on current resources.” Health care locals, along with CUPE Manitoba, have ramped up their campaign against health care cuts with lawn signs spreading out across Winnipeg and communities all over the province.

Local 204, our newly-formed 7,000-member health care local in Winnipeg, is also in the midst of a member engagement campaign. Dozens of members have already been trained and are having conversations with members in the 20 health care facilities where the local has members, talking to them about their new local, the campaign against health care cuts, and the benefits of being a CUPE member. This work is building solidarity within the local, and will serve our members well if the government decides to proceed with representation votes later this year.

Bill 29, the *Health Sector Bargaining Act*, was passed by the Manitoba legislature last year, but has not yet been proclaimed. The legislation would significantly reduce the number of bargaining units in health care, forcing representation votes.

The provincial government has followed through with its threat to end Manitoba Hydro's effective and popular PowerSmart program, hiving off the work into a new crown corporation by the name of Efficiency Manitoba. The move was made despite overwhelming support for the existing program and countless submissions from industry experts warning against the move.

Local 998, which represents workers in the PowerSmart program, is calling on all parties to ensure a fair transition of their members to the new crown corporation.

Our members in Manitoba continue to push back against Pallister's plans to increase privatization and the use of Social Impact Bonds in the child care and child welfare sectors.

Saskatchewan

CUPE members across the province, in every sector, continue to be affected by the provincial government's austerity agenda.

Funding cuts to public services have resulted in more than 50 lost jobs in the education sector. Municipalities are facing another year of reduced revenue sharing from the province, which is impacting our members on the ground and will lead to difficult bargaining. And a recent long-term care survey in the province showed widespread concern about inadequate staffing levels.

Bargaining continues for our 13,000 health care workers. Local 5430 continues to show leadership at the bargaining table by resisting proposed concessions. Mass reorganization of their workplaces continues as the province moves to implement a single provincial health authority. Local 5430 is continuing to engage their members through bargaining updates, as well as introducing them to their newly-formed provincial local.

There has been political change at the top of the two main political parties in Saskatchewan. On January 27, the Saskatchewan Party selected former cabinet minister Scott Moe as their new leader and the province's 15th premier. All indications are that Moe will continue on the path of austerity and privatization set by former premier Brad Wall, which means our members will continue to fight this government.

On March 3, MLA and family doctor Ryan Meili won the NDP leadership and became leader of the official opposition. CUPE members in Saskatchewan gave him an enthusiastic welcome when he addressed their division convention on March 9. The next provincial election is expected in 2020.

Alberta

CUPE continues its campaign for a jointly sponsored pension plan. The Local Authority Pension Plan (LAPP) covers most CUPE members in the province, including municipal and school board workers and employees of Alberta Health Services. Our members have been campaigning to make changes to the plan for the last few years, and are hopeful the government will introduce the much-needed amendments to legislation in coming months.

While the Alberta economy continues to improve, there is no doubt that we are in a difficult bargaining environment, across sectors and across the province. In the face of these challenges, CUPE members gathered to discuss strategies at a successful Bargaining Conference, held in Edmonton in February.

With a provincial election scheduled for early 2019, CUPE Alberta is already making plans to support the Alberta NDP in their re-election bid. Plans for this year include engaging their members in conversations with their MLAs, and offering political action training.

British Columbia

The first full budget of the new BC NDP introduces new programs and additional funding to make life fairer and more affordable for British Columbians. After 16 years of the Liberal government pleasing only the wealthy and corporations, this budget provides real action on the issues facing people all over BC.

The NDP, with support from the Green Party Caucus, have created policies and initiatives that align with the values and concerns of a majority of British Columbians. The focus on improving affordability in the areas of child care and housing is welcome news for CUPE members in BC.

Budget 2018 fulfills the BC NDP's election campaign promise to fully eliminate the regressive Medical Services Plan tax, a significant saving for individuals and families, and it begins the implementation of a provincial child care program focused on quality, affordability, and accessibility. The budget also allocates additional new funding for K-12 and post-secondary education, as well as transportation and other infrastructure projects.

In the aftermath of the 128 days of lockout at Pacific Blue Cross (PBC), Local 1816 and CUPE BC, and other labour partners, had joined forces to ensure a slate of progressive board members were elected at the benefit providers' annual general meeting. The election of all seven progressive nominees sends a clear message about the desire for change at PBC and represents an overwhelming rebuke of the company's treatment of its workers in the last round of bargaining. PBC plan holders were clearly concerned about the board's role in allowing concessions and tolerating a lockout, and the turnout of 800 primary plan members for the vote really told the story.

When Trustee Barry Neufeld made homophobic and transphobic comments regarding the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) policy adopted by School District 33, Local 411 knew they could not stand idly by and allow students and staff in Chilliwack schools to be discriminated against or made to feel unsafe at work. Neufeld described transgender identity as a symptom of mental illness and harmful to society.

Local 411 filed a human rights complaint against Barry Neufeld and School District 33 in January. The case is not about freedom of expression, but about providing safe workplaces by affirming that transphobia and homophobia have no place in our schools. Local 411 represents more than 800 education assistants, clerical, custodial, maintenance, and transportation education support workers in Chilliwack.

Local 561 members ratified the agreement to transfer active employees in the School District 43 Non-Teaching Pension Plan (NTPP) to the BC Municipal Pension Plan (MPP) with 97 per cent of members voting in favour. Local 561 represents support service workers in the Coquitlam School District. The main terms of the agreement include a 4 per cent wage increase to cover the pension contribution difference between the two plans; full recognition in the MPP of all past service in the NTPP; and a “no worse off” guarantee for members who retire within five years of transferring to the MPP.

Hospital Employees’ Union (HEU)

The 2018 provincial budget continues last September’s positive shift in BC’s priorities for health care, as part of the province’s commitment to affordability, improved services, and a strong economy that works for everyone. The budget allocates \$1.5 billion in new spending over the next three years, putting the health system back on track

Direct care in residential care will see an infusion of \$548 million in new money. The budget also promises \$950 million in additional funding to maintain health services and improve primary care, meaning more frontline workers to provide quality care for a growing and aging population. The government’s commitment to new and long overdue construction of hospitals was reaffirmed by the budget. HEU is looking forward to a long-needed review of public-private-partnerships (P3s), as there is growing evidence everywhere that P3s are the most expensive way to finance new hospital construction.

Despite moves by the province to address the shortage of care staff in BC’s nursing homes, a Burnaby care facility (Finnish Manor) is contracting out nearly 50 care aides and other staff in order to slash wages and benefits. Virtually none of the existing staff will continue working at the site.

The provincial government must reverse the ongoing practice of contracting out in residential care established by the former BC Liberal government. BC’s Seniors Advocate recently reported that 85 per cent of care homes are not funded to meet minimum staffing guidelines, and the provincial government has started to release additional funding to begin to address the crisis.

While the sub-contractors haven't disclosed the wages they'll pay at Finnish Manor when the current workforce is replaced, the union expects the hourly rate for care aides to drop by up to \$5 an hour, with minimal benefits and no pension. If the BC Care Providers Association is serious about solving the recruitment and retention crisis, they should walk the walk and work harder with their members to establish decent working and caring conditions in the sector.

Airlines

CUPE appeared in Federal Court in February to argue that the unsafe 1:50 flight attendant-passenger ratio must be repealed. Unfortunately, because the Minister of Transport has no intention to revise the regulation and go back to the proven 1:40 ratio, CUPE's legal fight has become all the more crucial. We are now waiting for the Federal Court to issue its decision.

In December, the House of Commons finance committee issued its pre-budget consultations report and called on the Liberal government to "limit rising passenger and operational costs by preventing the privatization of Canadian airports". Currently, airports are publicly owned, and privately managed by non-profit airport authorities that pay rent to the government and reinvest revenues in the facilities. CUPE has been advocating against airport privatization since it was proposed in a review of the *Transportation Act* initiated by the Harper government. The report of the finance committee is a good sign that the idea isn't making any headway with the Liberals, but we need to stay vigilant and be ready to fight back if it resurfaces.

Organizing Report

During the period of December 1, 2017 to February 28, 2018, our organizing efforts have brought in new members and protected existing members. After an almost two-year organizing drive across the country, CUPE is now the bargaining agent for one new bargaining unit at the RCMP. Our efforts paid off and we now have 1,121 new members employed by the RCMP as Telecom Operators and Intercept Monitors.

In addition, we organized 217 members in health care, 36 members in social services, 101 members in transportation, 97 members in other groups, 87 members employed in municipalities, and 55 members in universities. This totals 1,720 new members into the CUPE family in 18 bargaining units.

We are currently involved in 39 active campaigns that, if successful, would bring 6,673 new members into CUPE. At Labour Boards across the country, we have 13 projects representing 628 new members waiting for certification votes to be conducted and protecting 60 existing members. There are four projects that will protect 14,100 existing members because of both legislative and non-legislative restructuring.

Members (cont'd)

- James Baragar Member of Local 1000 – Ontario
- Rob Blyskosz Member of Local 4400 – Ontario
- Debra Ann Gogan Member of Local 963 – New Brunswick
- Myriam Nievas Member of Local 4660 – Ontario

Retired Staff

- George Williams Servicing Representative – Peel Area Office
- Marilyn Griffith Collective Agreement Analyst – National Office
- Joe Denofreo Servicing Representative –
British Columbia Regional Office

In Closing

Heading into spring also means heading into provincial division convention season. I look forward to meeting and hearing from activists and members across the country over the next three months. I have been amazed at the level of activism across our country and the hard work that you put forward so that life is better for all Canadians. See you soon!

In solidarity,



MARK HANCOCK
National President

:fb/ceu