

STRENGTHENING OUR SOLIDARITY: STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2021-2023

These past two years have been like none other. As CUPE members, we have shown tremendous strength, resilience, and commitment to community throughout the pandemic. We were the frontline workers facing the fear of an unknown virus. We showed up when others were told to stay home. We stayed home when we could, to keep others safe. We sacrificed. And while we were all in the same storm, we were on different boats. The pandemic deepened our inequality and more severely impacted women, Indigenous and racialized workers, newcomers, young workers, and those living on low incomes. At the same time, we have seen the devastating impact of the climate crisis threatening our lives and the planet.

The pandemic, so far, has taught us many lessons: privatization kills; public services are vital, frontline workers are heroes, technology can keep us connected in new ways, and economies are dependent not on CEOs and business people, but on those who are paid the least but kept our communities safe. The climate crisis has shown the importance of doing everything we can to reverse global warming and to invest in public infrastructure needed to withstand the growing impact of the climate emergency on our communities.

We now need to take the lessons we have learned and re-build the Canada we want. We can ensure a worker-centered recovery for women, Indigenous, Black and racialized people, the differently abled, LGBTQ2+, young people, people with low-income, rural dwellers, and all workers. We need to invest in public services and public social infrastructure, ensure our health care system is strong and sustainable, [commit to mentally healthy workplaces](#), build universal child care programs, and bring long-term care back into the public sector. And we must do all of this in a greener and more sustainable way. We want a recovery that puts the priorities of the working class first.

Strategic Directions defines the core work of our union, from our Local Unions, through our councils and divisions, to the National Executive Board. It builds on and complements the policy and direction adopted at each of our previous National Conventions.

We will face struggles in many provinces where Liberal and Conservative governments are controlling the messaging and the purse strings. They will try to argue that they cannot afford to invest in public services, and that privatization is cost effective. But we have heard that story too many times and we know that privatization always costs more in the long-run and delivers poorer quality services that only the privileged can access.

They will also argue that they cannot afford to pay workers fair wages or offer better working conditions. We know that we deserve more. Together, we will fight for stronger public services, push back against privatization, and demand fair collective agreements that keep up with rampant inflation, and pensions for all our members. We also recognize that many of our struggles are class struggles, and we therefore commit to being a voice for the voiceless, the vulnerable and those left behind in our society.

The pandemic has given us an opportunity to make changes, to invest in people and the planet, to ensure no one is left behind. At all levels of our union, and with our allies in labour, CUPE will leverage strength and solidarity to build better communities and a better society.

Safer Union Spaces

The Safe Union Spaces Working Group is seized with the task of addressing sexual violence and gender-based harassment in the union – alongside other forms of harassment and discrimination in CUPE. It has been consulting with members on how to make CUPE spaces safer and welcoming for all. We re-affirm the need to take concerns about discrimination, gender-based violence, sexual harassment, intimidation, and other forms of harassment within CUPE seriously and address them with speed and sensitivity and to work on prevention. CUPE will provide the Working Group with staff and other resources it needs to complete this work and to familiarize members with their recommendations over the next two years.

In the interim, CUPE will work to implement recommendations from the Working Group in collaboration with the National Executive Board and will continue to report back to members.

The Working Group:

- Will investigate and recommend best practices around bystander intervention and consent.
- Will make recommendations on additional or different training and education on harassment and discrimination to be offered to staff, leadership and locals on an ongoing basis.
- Will consider changes to all our complaints procedures and investigations, and address the need for transparency and accountability in the complaints processes.
- Will review the CUPE Constitution, Ombudsperson program, the Code of Conduct, the Trial Procedure and Alternate Process, and the Equality Statement and recommend changes if necessary.
- Will present their findings to Convention 2023 where it is also anticipated that there may be constitutional amendments and/or resolutions coming forward based on this work.

- Will make recommendations on how locals, divisions, and councils can develop and maintain safe working spaces.
- Is committed to changing the culture that allows harassment and discrimination to flourish within CUPE and having a zero-tolerance policy, because we know that we will be stronger together when all the members of our community are safer.
- Recommend ways men can contribute to our collective work to create safe spaces.

Human Rights

CUPE will continue the critical anti-racism and reconciliation work of dismantling barriers and inequality within our movement as we also participate in the broader work of building a progressive country. We will integrate our human rights work with all of the work of our union. Our plan is to do this by:

- Working alongside and supporting grassroots organizations focused on reconciliation, anti-racism, anti-oppression, migrant rights, women's rights, queer and trans rights, employment equity, accessibility, as well as on pay equity.
- Offering more anti-oppression, cultural safety and anti-racism education and training to tear down the barriers that hold people back.
- Using social media platforms to highlight CUPE's human rights work, and that of allied organizations and the labour movement around the world.
- Drawing attention to the ongoing struggles of equity-seeking communities and equity-seeking workers both in Canada and globally through all of our publications and digital communications.
- Fighting online hate, oppression and intimidation, including demanding better laws to hold social media platforms accountable for spreading hate.

Worker-Centred Recovery

As we slowly regain a sense of normalcy, in our communities and in our workplaces, we will not return to the way things were. We will rebuild in a way that provides everyone with opportunities to contribute and benefit in our post-pandemic world, especially those who have been hardest-hit including equity-seekers, and those who identify as women. Together we must do better for all, by:

- Ensuring continued and sustained public investment in public services and public utilities, and fighting all forms of privatization.
- Investing in greater social and physical infrastructure.
- Making large corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes, including closing tax loopholes and access to tax havens.

- Fighting for public programs that allow equitable access to work, including universal child care, public group homes, and public long-term care, so caregivers can go to work knowing their loved ones are safe.
- Creating a more equitable post-pandemic recovery by negotiating accessible remote work and telework agreements.

Bargaining Forward

Governments and employers will use the pandemic to implement austerity spending, attack our wages, benefits, and pensions, and try to bargain two-tier deals. CUPE will defend our collective agreements and bargain for better by:

- Continuing to bargain forward, refusing to accept concessions or two-tier collective agreements.
- Bargaining a minimum of 10 paid-sick days for all our members.
- Demanding access to benefits, pension plans for all workers, and real wage increases to overcome rampant inflation by establishing aggressive wage increase targets by region.
- Coordinating and centralizing our bargaining.
- Fighting for the rights of workers to disconnect from work.
- Ensuring that workers have the tools and training necessary to adapt to technological changes in the workplace and defending our members' jobs from the threat of automation.

Organizing

The pandemic showed us the importance of solidarity and unionization. We continue to face threats from governments like the United Conservatives in Alberta who want to remove union protection for workers. We will not allow this to happen. Every worker deserves the safety and protection of a union.

To strengthen our bargaining power and support our community, we need to grow our union. We will do this by:

- Reaching out to new workers in our sectors, and to the unorganized and precarious in our workplaces.
- Organizing new sectors and new workplaces.
- Bringing privatized services back into the public sector.
- Working with our allies and investing in community-based organizing.
- Resisting contracting out, organizing those workers when work is outsourced, and bringing work back in house.
- Expanding on our Organizing Policy Paper (Growing Stronger) and pursuing new opportunities for wall-to-wall organizing and growth in long-term care, home care and child care the pandemic has increased awareness of and demand for.

- Advocating for legislation that aids in our organizing efforts and fighting back against bills that undermine our ability to organize.

Defending our Members

Our members know what it is like to work without the support and resources they need. Our workplaces are in desperate need of secure funding and better staffing levels. Whatever challenges we face in the future, CUPE will advocate to get workers the support they need. Here's how we'll do it:

- Campaigning to raise wages, benefits, and pensions for all.
- Providing locals with the supports they need to deal with complex and evolving pandemic realities, including vaccine mandates and new government regulations and legislation, ensuring health and safety protections are based on science, and helping locals communicate with and address the concerns of their members.
- Ensuring employers provide physically and mentally safe and healthy work spaces, including protection against aggression and violence from those we serve.
- Ensuring our members and all workers have access to strong and accessible mental health services, [toolkits](#), and supports.
- Raising public awareness when our members' jobs or wages are under attack
- Fighting for anti-scab legislation across the country.
- Advocating for increased funding for public services to support workers and communities.

Strong and Vibrant Locals

We are all stronger when we work and grow together. Our locals are the bedrock of our communities and often the voice of progress. We need to be the voice of acceptance too. The labour movement has started the important work of grappling with reconciliation, racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, ableism, and ageism, but there is much more to be done. We will create respectful, safer, more welcoming spaces for all workers, by:

- Offering more education and training in anti-racism, anti-oppression and cultural safety.
- Bargaining inclusive language into our collective agreements that recognizes the unique needs of all of our members.
- Fighting back against systemic racism and encouraging diverse members to use their voice.
- Increasing the representation of Indigenous, Black, and racialized members in our union, and dismantling the barriers that prevent their full participation.
- Administering and enforcing our collective agreements with an anti-racist and anti-oppression lens.

- Taking ownership of our union spaces and making people feel safe, affirmed, and supported, with resources on consent, violence, bystander intervention, and harassment.
- Building participation and membership engagement in locals by encouraging more members to participate in lobbies, demonstrations, and other political events.

Stronger Communities, Stronger Planet

Strong communities are built on well-funded public services and run on the labour of public sector workers. All levels of our union have an important role to play in communities across Canada. With active engagement and support in our communities we can build the progressive, inclusive, climate and worker-friendly Canada we want. Workers belong in the street, in the halls of Parliament and everywhere in between. We will achieve this by:

- Joining the calls of climate activists across the country and the globe for immediate and sustained action to address the climate crisis and fight the global heating that threatens all life on earth, and implementing the calls to action in CUPE's recently updated Environmental Policy.
- Connecting with grassroots community organizations who share our values.
- Partnering with allied organizations in communities across the country in their important work.
- Encouraging our members to join boards of directors and run for political office, and supporting them once elected.
- Continuing our affiliation with the NDP, supporting NDP candidates and campaigns, and participating in the governance of the party at provincial and federal levels.
- Helping all our members understand the importance and relevance of the NDP as our partner in the class struggle for better working and living conditions for all.
- Engaging our members in political action to fight attacks from right-wing governments across the country, and Liberals who pretend to be progressive but attack workers' rights when in government.
- Reinvigorating our participation in the broader labour movement, including labour councils and federations of labour.

International Solidarity

CUPE is committed not only to a better country for all, but a better world for all. Workers are united by their struggles under a global capitalist system which rewards some and punishes many others. We recognize how and where the system is failing others and that workers must stand together. We will extend our international solidarity by:

- Connecting our members with workers around the world and learning from their struggles and their victories.
- Supporting those resisting poor working conditions, and sharing the stories of workers around the globe fighting back against austerity and learning from their tactics.
- Uncovering the impact of our investments on our global working family, including those of our pension plans, and ensuring they reflect our labour values and respect for human rights and the health of our planet.

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