



The way forward: Strategic Directions 2017-2019

ADOPTED AT THE
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CONVENTION

The way forward: Strategic Directions

The story of CUPE is the story of our members working together to make progress. Our collective commitment to each other, and to our communities, is to build better workplaces and a better world. CUPE members are leaders in this movement for economic and social justice.

Despite the strongest economic growth in a decade, the working class is still under attack and being exploited at home and around the world. Ongoing austerity budgets are reshaping our society by inflicting deep cuts to budgets while slashing and privatizing the services and programs that people rely on. Governments refuse to fairly tax corporations and the wealthiest individuals, which robs public services of funding needed to deliver the services that are the foundation of our communities. Corporations and some governments are actively suppressing working people's collective power through attacks on unions and labour rights. Together, these factors continue to fuel economic inequality and the concentration of wealth. The gap between the richest few on the planet and the rest of us continues to widen. People are hurting and looking for answers.

Divisive, hateful leaders like US President Donald Trump, and others like him in Canada and around the world, capitalize on this desperation, fanning the flames of hate and insecurity to divide workers one from another with anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, and racism in all its forms, xenophobia, white supremacy and fear. This atmosphere feeds the racism and discrimination that is alive and well in Canada. Gains made by equality-seeking groups over half a century are under threat in our country. There is an urgent need to fully recognize the historical and ongoing harm Canada has done to Indigenous peoples, to call for reparations, and to work for reconciliation by building new relationships that fully respect the rights and the histories of Indigenous peoples. But these renewed attacks have ignited new resistance in Canada and around the world. By mobilizing for action against discrimination, poverty and injustice, CUPE members will advance our vision of a better country.

CUPE's Strategic Directions for the next two years are founded on 50 years of activism. We've made many advances – in some cases, making history. Strategic Directions 2017-2019 is rooted and based in the work we already do every day, in countless ways, to make a difference. It builds on the Strategic Directions that CUPE members have adopted at every convention since 2003. Each Strategic Directions has built on the one that came before, and together they set the overall direction and broad priorities for CUPE at all levels. Strategic Directions works hand-in-hand with the specific actions and issues highlighted in the resolutions that delegates vote on at every national convention. Our National Executive Board checks in on the progress we've made at every board meeting, ensuring accountability and oversight. Together, we'll keep moving forward on the issues and priorities that matter to us all.

The economic realities of our world continue to shift, and while we remain committed to a minimum wage of \$18 an hour for our members, we recognize that \$18 is not a living wage in some communities, and we recognize that in some workplaces we have much work to do to reach this goal. We will also

continue our fight for good secure jobs and decent pensions for all workers, including a significant expansion of Canada's public pension system. CUPE continues to mobilize and take legal action against moves by the federal and some provincial governments to allow employers to convert defined benefit to target benefit pension plans. And we will continue to fight for increases in minimum wages and for legislation enabling workers to organize in every region.

CUPE plays a leading role in fighting for high quality public services and publicly-owned infrastructure, and against privatization through new arrangements like "social financing," "asset recycling," "leveraging" through selling off public utilities, and public-private partnerships. We are committed to keeping our members' pension funds from investing in or profiting from P3s in Canada and anywhere in the world. We will continue to oppose all privatization plans, including the Canada Infrastructure Bank, an institution that will funnel millions in subsidies to corporations banking on large private profits from public infrastructure projects.

CUPE is committed to building a union that is inclusive and representative of the diversity of our members. We remain committed to the recommendations of the National Women's Task Force, and will take concrete action for gender equality in CUPE. We will work toward an inclusive and representative union by promoting mentoring for new leaders, ensuring a role for equity-seeking members at every level of our union, fostering inclusion at the bargaining table and strengthening alliances in our communities.

Our action plan draws on the lessons learned and the gains we've made since our last convention. United, we've organized to engage more members, build stronger locals and become an even more powerful union. This action plan lays out the next steps in growing our base and mentoring new leaders and activists.

We've mobilized to build the solidarity it takes to make gains at the bargaining table, improving our members' lives and working conditions, and strengthening public services. We've won victories that make our workplaces safer, and that advance human rights for our members and all workers. This action plan lays out the next steps to strengthen our bargaining power and advance workers' rights.

For every victory, there is a new challenge. In Canada and around the world, right-wing governments are cutting to the bone, targeting unions, public services and pensions. Decades of tax cuts have benefited corporations while starving communities and services of much-needed funding. Corporate power continues to grow, and to target public services as a source of profit. Rising inequality is eroding the ties that bind us together as a society.

There is a better way. Together with our allies, CUPE is a powerful force for change and for social justice for our communities. This action plan lays out the next steps to elect progressive, pro-worker governments, protect public services from privatization, organize for change and fight for global justice.

When CUPE members pull together, we have what it takes to make gains for ourselves, and to build better communities and a more fair and equal world. We will keep pushing back – and pushing forward to expand public services, create stable, secure full-time jobs, raise the wages of all workers, and deepen the connections with our allies.

Over the next two years, let's take the next steps. Moving forward together, in solidarity.

Together for a stronger union

To make gains in our workplaces and in our communities, we must begin at home, in our locals. Over the next two years, we will support members and locals with strategic initiatives that build stronger, more inclusive local unions, and that increase our bargaining strength.

EXPANDING OUR MEMBERS' POWER

Our comprehensive organizing plan is laid out in *Growing stronger*. Organizing the unorganized is the first step in building workers' power. We will continue to expand and strengthen our membership base by:

- Launching a comprehensive member engagement program for locals, that takes the next steps in our Building Strong Locals work.
- Mentoring new leaders and activists who reflect the diversity of our membership.
- Updating our membership survey in 2018, to deepen our understanding of who our members are, and the challenges they face.
- Developing a course module that deepens members' understanding of the economic, social and political forces and policies that are increasing the inequality gap in Canada and the world, as part of the Steward Learning Series.

INCREASING OUR BARGAINING STRENGTH

It's vital that CUPE members stand together against attacks on our collective agreement rights, two-tier contract proposals and other concessions. But that is not enough. We must also make gains at the bargaining table.

The process of bargaining a good collective agreement starts as soon as the last one is signed. We will develop tools and resources to support CUPE locals to develop and carry out successful strategies to protect and enhance members' jobs including fighting automation, protect and enhance wages and working conditions, and promote better public services.

CUPE members will continue to work in coalitions, with our allies and with community members who use public services, to strengthen us in bargaining.

We will equip our members with the resources they need, and increase our bargaining capacity by:

- Fighting at the bargaining table for real wage increases, for a living wage, secure full-time jobs, increased pensions, and expanded pension and benefit coverage for all CUPE members including part-time and casual members.
- Supporting coordinated and central bargaining for CUPE locals.
- Opposing legislated settlements and restrictions on the right to free collective bargaining.
- Developing campaign strategies, tools, and resources for bargaining in a variety of circumstances, including fighting concessions, where we have the right to strike, where we don't, and where we work under essential services designations. These tools will help locals:

- Do strategic planning.
- Engage our members.
- Protect precariously-employed members and stop employers from using low-wage strategies to erode our wages and working conditions.
- Prepare for strikes, including membership mobilization.
- Ensure locals are aware of the many resources and tools available to them.
- Organizing a national conference that will build members’ skills and capacity to support CUPE’s bargaining policy to defend against concessions and two-tier agreements on the ground. The conference program will focus on the campaign strategies, tools and resources for bargaining and enforcing our collective agreements. We will also highlight our successes.

FIGHTING FOR SAFE WORKPLACES

Every worker who goes to work has the right to come home safe and healthy. Increasingly precarious employment, funding cuts and understaffing in public services erode health and safety in our workplaces. Every CUPE member has the right to a safe and healthy workplace that is free from violence. We will build our members’ power to defend their health and safety rights by:

- Continuing to pressure governments in every region and federally to ensure better health and safety protection for all workers.
- Ensuring that health and safety legislation has a central role for workers in joint committees at all levels.
- Strengthening our network of health and safety activists in the workplace by boosting and supporting CUPE members’ participation in health and safety committees, and workplace activism to defend our rights.

- Ensuring locals have the tools required to combat violence in the workplace in all its forms, including domestic and sexual violence, and to protect our members’ physical and mental health and safety.

When we expand and deepen our members’ engagement and activism in our union, we add to the ranks of progressive leaders in hundreds of communities from coast to coast to coast. As Canada’s largest union, we know a better Canada isn’t just necessary – it’s within our reach. When members take action at the grassroots, in their community, they make gains for more inclusive, safer and equitable workplaces. When local unions bargain better wages and working conditions, the whole community benefits. Together, these gains strengthen vital public services. And stronger public services are the anchor of the fair and equal society we’re all fighting for. Building a better Canada really does begin at home, in our local unions. From there, the ripple effect is powerful. Let’s keep reaching out to all our members, bargaining forward and fighting for safe workplaces. Every time we do, we’re equipping more people to work for change in their communities, hand-in-hand with our friends, neighbours and allies.

Building working class solidarity in our communities

When CUPE members work to make gains in their workplaces, we also work to build a fairer and more equal society. We cannot win in isolation. We need to keep pushing for changes that make life better for all workers and lift everyone out of poverty. We will work in coalition with our allies and with people who rely on public services to protect good jobs and public services, to push for better wages and working conditions for all workers, to fight racism in all its forms, and to advocate for economic and social justice in our communities and country, and around the world. We'll support our members and our allies in the fight for equality. And we'll do it together.

BUILDING OUR CAMPAIGN POWER

Our members are our greatest strength, and we are strongest when we support each other. When we mobilize our members, and build support in our communities, we can stop privatization, support public services, resist concessions at the bargaining table, and push for stable jobs and better wages and working conditions for every worker. We will increase our members' ability to run effective campaigns by:

- Creating a campaign program and tools to train and support members in every region, building our members' skills and capacity to defend public services, and to resist concessions across sectors.

ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

We will keep organizing to influence all levels of government on the issues that matter to our members, and our communities. We'll do this by:

- Working with our allies to build broad social movements that strengthen and expand our social safety net, including advocating for universal pharmacare, pay equity, strong workplace pensions for everyone and public long-term care and child care.
- Mobilizing and strengthening coalitions to fight for an end to privatization, big and small, in all its forms, and an expansion of public ownership and control of public infrastructure.
- Targeting municipal and provincial elections, as well as the 2019 federal election, to advance our members' priorities, with a focus on:
 - Strong public services and social supports.
 - Good wages and working conditions for all workers.
 - Strong support for our political party, the New Democratic Party, including encouraging our members to get involved in the NDP, and stepped-up work to elect NDP candidates and governments.
 - A fairer election system through proportional representation in federal and provincial elections.
- Advocating for labour legislation which supports organizing workers in all sectors and growing the strength of the labour movement, and against legislation which limits workers' right to strike.
- Advocating for changes that improve the lives of all workers and raise the floor for everyone, including a higher minimum wage and strengthened employment standards laws that improve working conditions and expand protection for all workers.
- Advocating for the right of all people with disabilities in Canada to have decent, meaningful and fairly-paid work.

- Opposing any two-tier provisions and exclusions in employment and labour legislation for young and precarious workers, in any sectors.
- Working for equity for racialized workers, women, LGBTTTQI workers, and for workers with disabilities.
- Fighting against the rising tide of hatred, and empowering our members and chartered bodies with the tools they need to speak and to act against discrimination in the workplace and the community.
- Advocating for real action for reconciliation for Indigenous peoples, including calling on governments in Canada to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action; educating our members on the residential school system and the attempted genocide of Aboriginal peoples in Canada; and supporting Indigenous organizations and grassroots activism in efforts to promote healing and reconciliation.
- Educating and mobilizing our members about climate change, and working with environmental and social justice groups to protect the planet from the further impacts of climate change.

FIGHTING FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE

Our solidarity crosses borders, and spans the globe. We will continue to learn from and support the struggles of workers in other countries. The challenges they face are inextricably linked with those of our members and of all Canadian workers. We will continue to be part of the movement for global justice by:

- Supporting our members and other workers and allies around the world fighting for global justice, with a focus on building worker-to-worker solidarity and fighting international trade agreements.
- Advocating for an alternative model of trilateral trade and cooperation that meets the needs of workers and builds solidarity across our shared continent; and working with allies, at home and abroad, towards the inclusion of substantial provisions in all trade agreements that protect labour rights, human rights, and environmental sustainability.
- Pressuring the Canadian government to ensure that any renegotiated trade agreement will dispense with Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanisms and offer full protections for public services; and encouraging the government to include binding obligations on labour rights that address freedom of association and union security.



