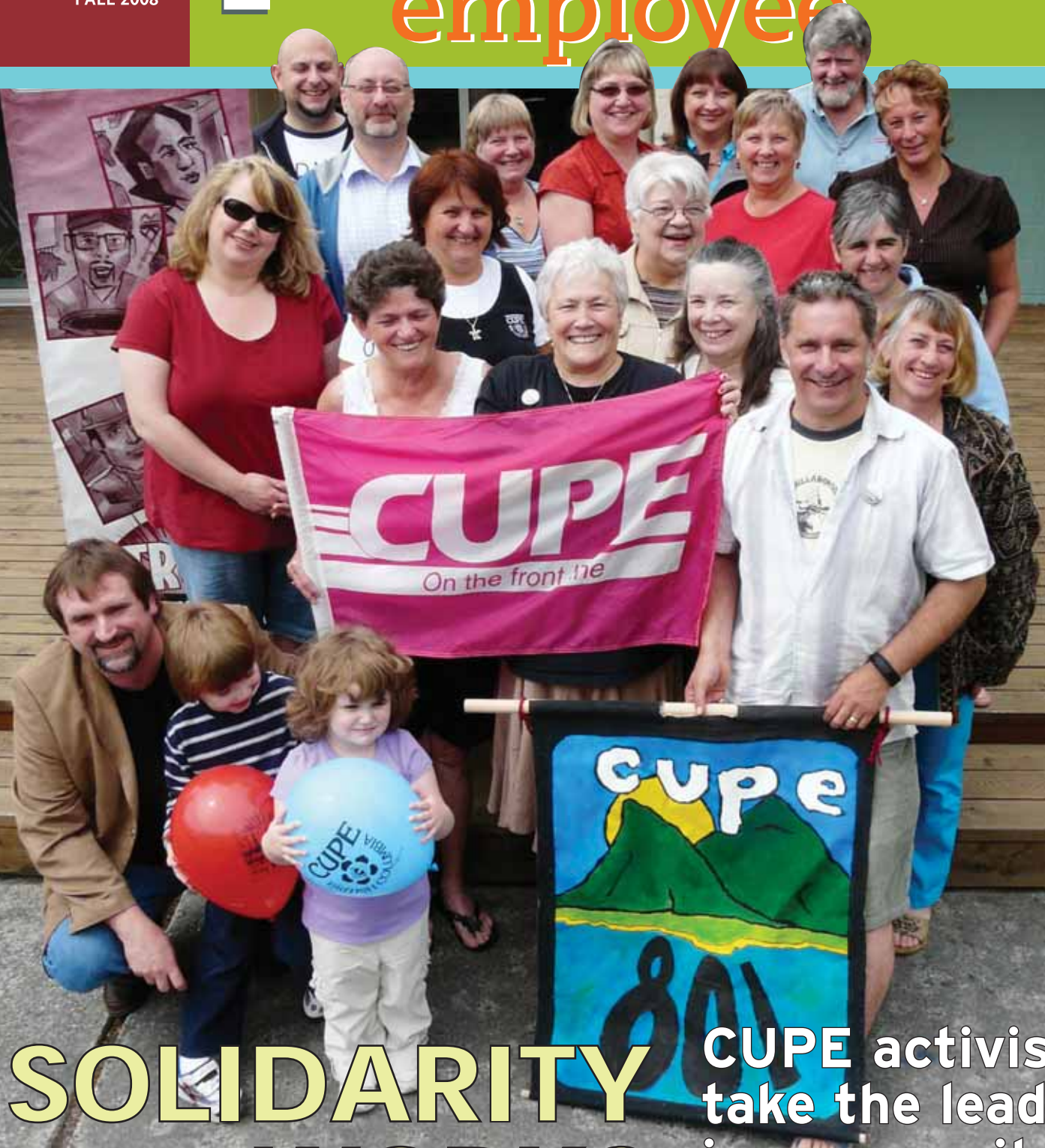


public employee



SEEKING LIFT-OFF
Flight attendants
push back against
Air Canada cutbacks
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SOLIDARITY WORKS

CUPE activists
take the lead
in community
elections

“Local governments – including school boards – are by far the most respected level of government.”

Nov. 15 elections will shape our communities

By the time you read this issue of *Public Employee*, Canadians will have voted in the October 14 federal election. Only one month and a day later, communities throughout British Columbia will hold municipal, school board and regional district elections. Then, next May, the province will once again go to the polls to decide whether the Campbell Liberals deserve a third term in office.

With all due respect to our MLAs and MPs, local governments – including school boards – are by far the most respected level of government. CUPE’s own polling has shown that people overwhelmingly trust local school boards to make decisions about the education of their children more than they trust the provincial government to do the same. Why is that? Why do we hold such faith in our local community leadership?

I believe it is because they are local. As I said many times on the road earlier this year, school trustees and councillors don’t make decisions from hundreds of miles away; they make them from the communities where they live and work. If people in those communities don’t like the decisions, the local politician will hear about it in the grocery store, on the way to work, or from over the backyard fence while talking with the neighbours. If you are a town councillor or school trustee, there is nowhere to hide.

And that’s how it should be. Proximity not only keeps more local politicians honest; it also shows how much more accessible and accountable they can be to the average voter. On November 15, we have a chance to take advantage of this proximity by casting a verdict on the three-year terms of our incumbent municipal mayors and councillors, school trustees and regional district representatives.

Over the next few weeks, take some time to think about how your community representatives have done their jobs – or what the new candidates have to offer. What is their position, or voting record, on issues like public-private partner-



□ **MEETING OF MINDS** Community empowerment was a big topic of discussion when I introduced CUPE National president Paul Moist and federal NDP leader Jack Layton to U.S. local investment guru Michael Shuman, the international guest speaker at CUPE BC’s annual convention in the spring.

ships, contracting out, pay equity, or the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA)’s impact on municipal decision-making?

If you’re talking with candidates, tell them why child care facilities on school properties should be run by CUPE members – and why it’s good to have a connection between school and care. Tell them why it’s *not* a good idea to have 35-year contracts with for-profit companies, and why the public sector owning and operating public facilities has been more successful.

Most of all, give yourselves a pat on the back. As this issue’s feature makes clear, CUPE knows how to run strong campaigns in community elections. This is largely due to the tireless efforts of so many of our members who volunteer to work the phone banks, distribute election materials, attend candidates forums and ask the hard questions of potential councillors and school trustees.

You are the ones who hold our local politicians’ feet to the fire. So for all you do, and for your efforts leading up to November 15, I cannot thank you enough.

Barry O’Neill is president of CUPE BC.



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One step closer to universal kindergarten?

This spring, CUPE BC told a Ministry of Education consultation on full-day kindergarten for children aged three to five that a publicly-funded, integrated system of early learning and child care services is what working parents want and need.

“We know that B.C. lags behind other provinces on its early learning and child care commitments. It’s past time for a major investment in this area,” said CUPE BC president Barry O’Neill.

“Child care workers provide services that every working family and their children in British Columbia should have access to,” said Sheryl Burns, vice president of CUPE 1936. “Affordable, quality child care is necessary at a time when working families are struggling to make ends meet.”



□ **COMMITTED TO CARE** CUPE 1936 member Eve Poon, a child care worker with Collingwood Neighbourhood House, does origami with children at Graham Bruce School. To meet other CNH workers like Eve, go to www.cupe.bc.ca/4810.



□ **GROUNDING** Flight attendants at a July 28 rally discussed the impact of Air Canada layoffs. “There will be fewer flight attendants, and flights will be cancelled,” said CUPE 4094 president Deb Purvey (inset). “This affects our communities and our tourism.”

Flight attendants fight lay-offs

RICHMOND | Air Canada flight attendants continue to push back against cuts to service and layoffs of 600 flight attendants and the closure of bases.

A CUPE study of the viability of closing the bases in Halifax and Winnipeg has also raised suspicion that the airline is planning a major downsizing of flights across Canada. CUPE 4094 members say there has already been a negative impact on flights to Asia.

More than 250 flight attendants and their supporters rallied at Vancouver Airport on July 28 to protest cuts that will not only have a devastating impact

on employees and their families but will result in economic loss to B.C. communities.

Air Canada had tried to circumvent Canada’s labour law by seeking an exemption, and flight attendants responded with thousands of e-mails and postcards to the federal labour minister, who denied Air Canada’s waiver. An arbitrator was assigned and members learned details of the ruling on September 19.

CUPE members have been asked to sign a petition at <http://cupe.ca/acpetition/>.

Community saves “Small School”

VANCOUVER | Community action by a grassroots coalition of parents, community members, and organizations (including CUPE BC and CUPE 15) kept the small community school of Garibaldi Annex open this past spring. The Vancouver School Board unanimously accepted the Garibaldi Action Committee’s plan – and added distance learning.

“As a result of the threat of our school closing, the community galvanized,” explained Kate Mulligan, a parent from the Garibaldi PAC. “We’re very, very happy.”

“Communities need a voice in the decision-making process,” said CUPE



□ **SAVE OUR SCHOOL** A busload of Garibaldi Action Committee members and their families made their presence known at the Vancouver School Board meeting on April 21.

BC president Barry O’Neill, in a letter to the community group. “Your persistence to advocate for what you knew to be a better decision never faltered, and we congratulate you.”

VOICES

A selection of quotes from B.C. newspapers

“When you go to work and give it your all on behalf of the company, to turn around and be treated this way is completely and utterly demoralizing.”

CUPE 4094 member Cynthia Rautio, a 24-year flight attendant with Air Canada, commenting on announced lay-offs of more than 600 workers – 300 of them in Vancouver – as a result of service cuts that Air Canada blamed on higher fuel prices.

The Province, Tuesday, July 29, 2008

“They are the people who teach swimming lessons and lead recreation programs, ensure the safety of patrons at the swimming pools, leave the comfort of their homes in the middle of the night to ensure that icy roads are passable for the morning commute, keep our parks beautiful, process permits, deal with all sorts of inquiries from the public, keep our drinking water safe, provide clerical and additional support to our mayor and council, and perform a myriad of other jobs that help our community thrive.”

CUPE 403 president Paul Albrecht, describing the work of local CUPE members in a letter to the editor.

Langley Advance, Tuesday, May 20, 2008.

“We’ll be on foot, working down from Canadian Tire to Victoria Quay. The city is providing garbage bags and gloves, and we’ll all be wearing our WorkSafe gear. We just thought it was time we should do it again.”

CUPE 118 spokesperson Ron Dunbar, describing his local’s latest voluntary cleanup initiative in the Port Alberni area.

Alberni Valley Times, Wednesday, June 11, 2008.

“We have to be political. We have to be vocal. We have to raise our voices against the travesty of job losses in rural B.C.”

CUPE 339 president and CUPE BC general vice-president Bev LaPointe, commenting on the Liberal government’s dismal record of forestry-related closures, during a rally for laid-off workers at Penticton’s Canwood furniture factory.

Keremeos Review, Thursday, July 17, 2008.

“I think a person has the right to work as long as they’re capable.”

CUPE 606 president Rob Zver, on a mandatory retirement policy requiring school bus drivers to leave the job at 65.

Nanaimo News Bulletin, Thursday, July 24, 2008.

A “gag law” worth defeating BC Liberals’ draconian Bill 42 stifles pre-election criticism of government

Bill 42, the *Election Amendment Act*, drastically alters the Act covering B.C. provincial elections.

Passed on May 29 by a closure motion, its most objectionable features are the introduction of an expanded 90-day pre-election period, the inclusion of new third-party expenditures limits and issue campaign spending (which would limit the Liberals’ exposure to critical analysis of their actions as government), and a change to voter registration which will make it harder for the homeless, students, casual and seasonal workers who may not have a “normal” residence, to vote.

The provisions in Bill 42 clearly go beyond reasonable limits to the “Freedom of Speech” and “Freedom of Association” rights guaranteed by the Charter, and are an unwarranted restriction on the rights of unions and other progressive groups to communicate with members.

Bill 42 also discriminates against the homeless and others who have residency issues and makes it much harder – if not impossible – for them to vote. For these reasons, CUPE BC took a leadership role in a campaign against Bill 42, and is now one of the lead plaintiffs in a legal challenge with Leo McGrady as Counsel.

“We anticipate that our challenge will be heard in early December, and we will provide updates on the CUPE BC website in the interim,” says CUPE legislative coordinator Mike Dumler.



MORE ONLINE www.justshutupbc.com



■ **FOR THE CHILDREN** From left, CUPE staff rep Cheryl Colborne joined CUPE 1936 members Cindy Busby and Andrea Miller, both early childhood educators at Collingwood Neighbourhood House, at the 37th annual conference of the Early Childhood Educators of BC, held May 29-31 in Richmond. CUPE National sponsored the Friday night gala and CUPE BC sponsored a delegates table at the event, which CUPE child care activist Randi Gurholt-Seary described as “the first ECEBC conference where unions played an integral role.”

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TILMA-UBCM agreement still leaves communities vulnerable

The provincial government has signed a deal with the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) that still leaves communities vulnerable to having their actions challenged by corporations through the Trade Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) between Alberta and British Columbia.



□ **RULE OF LAW** Trade law expert Steven Shrybman answers questions at a May 21 press conference where CUPE BC released Shrybman's legal opinion on Bill 32 and the TILMA. Shrybman said the BC Liberal legislation and the B.C.-Alberta trade agreement both "confront basic constitutional norms" by trumping the authority of judges and parliaments.

At the 2007 UBCM convention, delegates agreed that the TILMA would have far-reaching negative impacts on their communities. One resolution called on the Province to make "changes to the agreement to more specifically address local government concerns, exempt local governments from the agreement, or request that the Province withdraw from the agreement altogether."

The UBCM agreement, reached on July 25, covers some of the concerns raised by mayors and councillors. Procurement levels have been raised so municipalities will no longer have to invite Alberta firms to bid every time they buy something worth as little as \$10,000. The province has also agreed to include regulations on land use as an exception to those areas where corporations make claims against the municipality.

But in many other areas, the province simply refused to even negotiate. The government even rejected an amendment permitting local governments to defend their own measures if challenged. UBCM lawyer Don Lidstone told the UBCM that, given the government's fixation with liberalizing trade, "municipalities cannot assume the province will defend the measures of local governments before TILMA dispute settlement panels." Most important, municipalities still cannot give preference to local businesses paying taxes in the community, something that is already permitted in many American states and cities.

In a letter to mayors and councillors, CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill called on local governments to reject the TILMA as yet another provincial intrusion into the work of local governments.

BC SUPREME COURT RULING: NEW LEASE ON LIFE FOR INSITE

VANCOUVER | The BC Supreme Court's May 26 ruling that drug addicts should be provided with health care services to help manage addiction represents a huge victory for Vancouver's supervised-injection site, Insite, for the marginalized people who use its services, and for the CUPE members who work there.

The ruling granted Insite an exemption that allows the facility to stay open at least until June 2009.

"We feel vindicated by the victory but we're very concerned by the government's decision to appeal," says Leo Cooper, a longtime CUPE 1004 steward who has been with Insite since the beginning.

The Portland Hotel Society, which runs Insite, brought the case before the Supreme Court because the federal Conservatives had threatened to close Insite. The Harper government is appealing the decision.

Justice Ian Pitfield ruled that denying access to the site "amounts to a condemnation of the consumption that led to addiction in the first place, while ignoring the resulting illness."

Lauren Fullwood, a steward at Insite, says the work CUPE members do there removes barriers: "When you take away barriers, you meet people at their level and it can really change things."



□ **EMS STAFF CONVENE** More than 50 activists and staff who work in CUPE's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) sector met for a two-day conference on July 8 and 9. CUPE 873 provincial president John Strohmaier (centre), whose local hosted the conference, was joined by CUPE National president Paul Moist and CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill in welcoming participants.

COMING SOON!

CUPE'S EDUCATION ASSISTANTS SURVEY RESULTS ON THE WAY

The data is in and the reports are being finalized as we go to print.

The spring survey had participation from about 40 per cent of all education assistants in the K-12 system.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
bceducationassistants.ca



□ **BIG WIN** Maria Wahl and Brigitte Pronovost look forward to next July, when members of CUPE 825 Port Moody civic workers will again (after 10 years of contracting out) provide solid waste and recycling collection services.

Say bye-bye to privatized waste

Council decision brings Port Moody solid waste and recycling in-house

PORT MOODY City council has agreed with CUPE 825 that public workers deliver the best services to their community – and voted in June to contract in solid waste and recycling.

“The huge winners here are the residents of Port Moody, who endured poor service for 10 years,” says CUPE 825 president Maria Wahl. “They never forgot the quality of service CUPE members provided, and let that be known almost daily.”

The current contractor had won a five-year contract with a low bid, and council’s efforts to improve services were not successful. About eight months ago, council initiated a joint committee of CUPE and senior management to look at the viability of bringing this service in-house. CUPE Research helped develop a telephone survey that was used to collect data and canvass public opinion on the services being provided.

The survey found that 80 per cent of residents had experienced at least one missed pickup. Many residents reported repeated missed pickups, broken garbage bins, spilled garbage, and other problems.

“Politicians are recognizing that this is not a service that can be trusted to an outside party,” says Wahl.

Wahl hopes that other CUPE locals can use Port Moody as an example. In the local’s presentation to council, Wahl stressed the importance of making decisions in the interest of residents, but also stressed the quality of services CUPE members provide. “CUPE and strong communities and quality services go hand in hand,” she says.

Port Moody will order four automated collection trucks and will start the service in early July 2009. Brigitte Pronovost, vice president of CUPE 825, will be involved in the process of contracting in the service as part of her regular job with the city.

“I’ve seen and heard a lot of nightmares from this private contractor, so there’ll be a lot of satisfaction in bringing the work home,” she said.

BRINGING IT HOME

COQUITLAM | CUPE 386 members are taking on the fight to bring garbage collection back in-house. The service has been contracted out to various contractors for several years. Council has tried to correct problems of poor service by switching contractors. Coquitlam civic workers want to replace the current contractor, who is the same one collecting solid waste in Port Moody.

“Because a private contractor is collecting our garbage, we’re dealing with the same issues Port Moody faced: garbage not being picked up, safety issues, and no accountability to our elected council,” says CUPE 386 president Merina Meyer. “Coquitlam residents, like other residents in the Tri-Cities, deserve quality service that’s public.”

Port Coquitlam kept their collection services in-house when the other two cities in the Tri-Cities contracted out. The local believes public services like water and solid waste collection should not be trusted to private contractors.



□ **GETTING THE WORD OUT** CUPE 386 is using ads like this one to urge Coquitlam council members to do the right thing and bring collection services in-house.



□ **BIG COURAGE** Maria Fernanda Bolanos (front left) impressed CUPE members and staff who attended a dinner in her honour on August 6.

Facing a problem like Maria's

Cali, Colombia sanitation worker risks all to fight P3s

Maria Fernanda Bolanos says she was once so intimidated by the hit men on motorbikes circling her house that she cried all the time and was afraid to go outside.

The 34-year-old sanitation worker from Cali, Colombia had good reason to be afraid. Union activism can be lethal in her country, where labour leaders are regularly threatened and murdered for upholding their principles – such as defending public services. But like many others in her position, Bolanos confronted her fears and continues to fight for what's right.

Bolanos works for a publicly-owned utility called EMSIRVA, which operates municipal garbage and street cleaning in Cali, Colombia's third-largest city. She's also a leading member of SINTRAEMSIRVA, the union representing 500 EMSIRVA workers. During the summer, she visited Canada to tour CUPE worksites and meet various labour leaders.

Sitting down for an interview with *Public Employee* translated by CoDevelopment Canada's Barbara Wood, Bolanos spoke of anti-privatization campaigns that seemed identical

to those here – until she described the consequences of waging them.

"The union is trying to prevent the privatization of the company and trying to enforce the collective agreement," she said, adding that 80 per cent of Colombia's public services have already gone private. "As soon as they privatize, they will try to recontract the work at a lower price, without any benefits or salary agreement."

Bolanos said that her union and

others have tried to create a network with other movements in Cali, raising awareness about privatization throughout the city and region. However, the more successful their efforts are, the more dangerous those efforts become.

A former president of Bolanos's union, Carlos Chicaiza, was shot dead in 2005 while waiting to meet a mysterious caller. A few years earlier, while attending a Public Services International convention in Vancouver, Chicaiza had visited CUPE worksites and taken a garbage truck tour with then-CUPE 1004 president Ken Davidson.

Bolanos herself has received e-mail death threats – and the snipers on motorbikes are never far away – but she has decided not to let fear rule her life.

"Courage is the force that gives you the strength to continue," she said, adding that she has never considered becoming an exile or political refugee: "If everyone left our country, the struggle would end right there."

DONATIONS BOOST CODEV, SPENCE MOVES ON

VANCOUVER | CUPE National president Paul Moist presented CoDevelopment Canada with a \$100,000 cheque from CUPE's Global Justice (Union Aid) fund at CoDev's annual general meeting on September 18.

The donation will help CoDev establish an endowment fund to support campaign work that helps promote strong public services in the southern hemisphere.

CUPE BC, meanwhile, donated \$10,000 from the Colleen Jordan Humanity Fund to help relief efforts



Moist, Spence.

in Cuba following Hurricane Ike.

Also at CoDev's AGM, CUPE's local government liaison in B.C., Rhonda Spence, received tributes from around the room on the announcement of her retirement as CoDev

president after nine years.

Spence, a CoDev board member since 1994, is moving to Ottawa later this fall to become CUPE's new senior officer for international solidarity.

“We clearly have the resources, talent and commitment within our union to give ourselves a solid fighting chance to stop privatization and protect public services.”

Fighting privatization on many fronts in B.C.

CUPE is stepping up resources dedicated to fighting privatization. The 2007 CUPE National convention passed the “CUPE Fightback” campaign – a multi-million-dollar commitment to mobilize new resources and expertise to respond to privatization threats.

Here in B.C., we have been at the forefront of anti-privatization campaigns. And it’s good to see a renewed national priority on this significant issue.

As our successes demonstrate, it’s worth the effort.

This June, we saw the City of Port Moody bring home solid waste and collection services after ten years of contracting out. Kudos to CUPE 825 activists, local president Maria Wahl and CUPE staff.

In 2001, we were successful working as part of a coalition to keep the Seymour Water Filtration plant - Canada’s largest water filtration project - public.

In the late 1990s, CUPE and community allies campaigned successfully in the face of a significant lobby for a P3 (public-private partnership) water treatment plant in Kamloops. We now have the award-winning—and public—Kamloops Centre for Water Quality.

In August 2005, we helped stop the privatization of rural water services in the Regional District of Nanaimo. And in June 2006 we helped convince Whistler to say no to a P3 sewage treatment plant upgrade.

We have an ongoing campaign in the Capital Regional District (Victoria area) to ensure that new sewage treatment is publicly operated, despite the Campbell Liberal government’s determination that it be private.



□ **POSITIVELY PUBLIC** CUPE’s new anti-privatization coordinator, Kathy Corrigan, is working with servicing and specialist staff to help local campaigns to keep public services public.

And we have many tools to assist locals who want to fight privatization and contracting out. We have a national representative position dedicated to support anti-privatization campaigns. Kathy Corrigan is in the position, working with servicing and specialist staff to help local campaigns.

CUPE’s Union Development department offers excellent education courses of varying lengths to assist local activists to fight privatization, including the week-long “Taking on Privatization.”

CUPE BC’s Strong Communities team works directly with elected officials at all levels to provide information about privatization and other critical issues.

In addition to designated funds for the “CUPE Fightback” campaign, locals also have access to the CUPE National Defence Fund cost-sharing program. At its June 2008 meeting alone, the CUPE National Executive Board approved 23 cost share campaigns, totaling about \$567,000.

Do we always win? No. But we clearly have the resources, talent and commitment within our union to give ourselves a solid fighting chance to stop privatization and protect public services.

Donn Stanley is director for CUPE’s British Columbia region. He is retiring at the end of December.



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SMALL BUSINESS AND LABOUR "CLEAR FRIENDS" - SHUMAN

Those accompanying Barry O'Neill on his provincial tour couldn't help noticing the weather-beaten, dog-eared copy of Michael Shuman's *The Small-Mart Revolution* which the CUPE BC leader carried with him everywhere and quoted from liberally in his speeches. On Friday of convention, delegates got to hear from the Small-Mart guru himself.

Shuman, a local investment economist and best-selling author from the U.S., was this year's international guest speaker. He entertained and informed convention delegates with a 45-minute slide show and lecture on how smaller-scale local business and economic multipliers strengthen communities – and benefit labour.

Using a favourite comparison from his most famous book, Shuman reduced local economics to a choice between two approaches: TINA (There Is No Alternative to large-scale global capital and big corporations) and LOIS (Locally Owned, Import Substituted). Labour should embrace LOIS, he said, because it maximizes public revenue and generates better wages than TINA.

"Smaller businesses are becoming clear friends to the labour movement," Shuman concluded, "because they support living wage legislation."



□ **POUR NOTRE FRÈRES ET SOEURS** Representatives of locked-out CUPE members from the *Journal de Québec* newspaper finished a national tour with a dramatic presentation at this year's CUPE BC convention. B.C. contributions to the hardship fund totalled more than \$70,000.

Delegates embrace renewal, change

Sustainability and local investment were key themes for union activists this year

VANCOUVER | In the wake of Barry O'Neill's provincial tour on local development in rural economies, it was no surprise that CUPE BC's 45th annual convention was strong on themes of sustainability, local investment, and progressive alternatives to privatization.

O'Neill's opening night address focused on how CUPE members can play a key role in boosting local economies and developing positive alternatives to privatization.

"I've seen a water treatment centre stay public and a geothermal city hall," he said, noting examples in Kamloops and Castlegar. "There is more innovation in communities, given the opportunity, than we will ever know."

Delegates passed an emergency resolution on BC Liberal funding cuts to post-secondary education. It called on

CUPE BC to lobby the provincial government to restore funding to meet projected enrolment increases for 2008-09, provide new funds for additional spaces in high priority areas such as health care and skilled trades, and invest significantly in student finance initiatives to make post-secondary education accessible for more B.C. students.

In total, delegates passed 56 resolutions – including those to support coordinated bargaining efforts and campaigns to protect vital public services such as child care, and others reinforcing the union's commitment to fight public-private partnerships.

Speeches by federal NDP leader Jack Layton, provincial NDP leader Carole James, and BC Federation of Labour president Jim Sinclair urged delegates to renew their commitment to political action. But convention's most dramatic moment came on Thursday (April 17), when all 406 delegates rose to their feet in support of guest speakers representing the 252 locked out workers of the *Journal de Québec*. CUPE members in B.C. showed their solidarity by raising more than \$70,000 in donations and matched contributions from CUPE National.

□ **THINKING SMALL** U.S. economist Michael Shuman faced a big lineup of delegates to buy his best-selling *The Small-Mart Revolution* following his convention speech.





SOLIDARITY WORKS!

■ **ACTION PLAN** This fall's municipal elections were high on the agenda as the CUPE BC executive and CUPE staff gathered in Kelowna for the annual summer "think tank".



■ **MAKING A DIFFERENCE** Newly-elected Castlegar councillor Raymond Koehler and two-term Burnaby councillor Colleen Jordan have used their union activism to become effective voices at city hall.

CUPE ACTIVISTS TAKE THE LEAD IN COMMUNITY ELECTIONS

CUPE 3999-09 member Raymond Koehler knows how hard it is to succeed in municipal politics.

Elected to Castlegar city council in a narrow by-election win on April 5, Koehler squeaked through by less than 40 votes to beat his nearest opponent, a wealth management consultant.

And that was after finishing dead last in his first attempt, in 2005.

As last spring's by-election approached, he had to scramble to raise enough cash and credit to get the job done. Along the way, he sought and received endorsements and contributions from various unions, including the BC Teachers' Federation, BCGEU and HEU, as well as CUPE.

BILL 7

CHANGES FOR COMMUNITY ELECTIONS

When asked to account for his success as a first-time candidate – and as a transplanted, gay West End Vancouverite who was relatively new to the Kootenays – Koehler mentions two factors. One was realizing that he had to be open to support no matter where it came from. “I visited every church in the community,” he says. “People appreciate that you’re there.”

The other was leaving no stone unturned in the effort to reach every CUPE member in his local. As he seeks re-election on November 15, Koehler knows that the support of local CUPE members will be key to his success. And, if recent history with CUPE campaigns is any indication, he knows he’ll get that support – even with the election coming only a month after the federal vote on October 14.

Ready to Rock the Vote

As major stakeholders with members in the municipal and K-12 sectors, CUPE activists play a leading role in campaigns for community elections. CUPE BC’s political action committee (PAC) has stepped up its efforts to help ensure that progressive candidates put their names forward, run effective campaigns and get elected as municipal councillors, school trustees, and regional district representatives in community elections to be held throughout the province on November 15.

“We can effect change, because we have enough members – along with their households, their friends and their families, to do it,” explains PAC chair Carlene Keddie, a CUPE BC general vice president. “If every CUPE member voted for a progressive candidate in their community, we would change the face of our workplaces.”

It happens at every political level. In the 2005 provincial election, activist efforts helped elect New Democrats in several constituencies that

The BC Liberals’ Bill 7 amended the *Local Government Act*. This Act covers all local government elections, including: school boards, municipalities, and regional districts.

This legislation was passed at the end of March 2008, retroactive to March 5, 2008. The 2008 *Candidate and Campaign Organizers Guide and FAQ’s* are available from local government offices and the ministry website: www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd/governance/elections.htm.

“Although this is a bad piece of



Dumler

legislation, and very poorly drafted, it does not contain spending limits,” says CUPE legislative coordinator Mike Dumler. “Nor

do the new rules prohibit any of our usual community election activities.”

For more information, contact CUPE BC (604-291-9119) or CUPE Regional (604-291-1940).

might have gone Liberal. Within the following eight months, similar activist campaigns helped elect progressive councillors and trustees in the community elections and boosted the NDP’s B.C. caucus in the federal election.

“We couldn’t have done this without having that network of regional organizers (zone coordinators), the CUPE activists who take the time to volunteer to make phone calls, stuff envelopes, make poll cards, et cetera,” says Keddie. “Other members spent hours of their own time working with potential candidates – talking to them, and finding out where they stand on issues important to us.”

CUPE BC’s community election campaigns are member-to-member focussed. Using its network of activists, the union has set up phone banks to contact members in every corner of the province. It also has election funding in place for CUPE locals: any local that contributes a donation to an endorsed candidate can get matching funds from CUPE BC for their can-



■ **NEXT UP** CUPE BC’s future political action campaign efforts depend on the union’s ability to train younger activists such as these new delegates at Division convention last spring.

■ **PROTECTING OUR ASSETS** Former NDP premier Dave Barrett reminded delegates at CUPE BC’s political action conference that their activist work makes a difference in defending public services.



MEANWHILE, IN B.C. POLITICS ...



LaPointe

CUPE members and staff are already out of the gate seeking NDP nominations for the next provincial election.

In the Kootenays, CUPE 339 president and CUPE BC general vice-president Bev LaPointe is seeking the nomination for Nelson-Creston, the seat currently occupied by long-time NDP stalwart Corky Evans.



Corrigan

In the Okanagan, CUPE 5523 president Mark Olsen is seeking the nomination for Vernon-Monashee, the seat currently held by Children and Family Development Minister Tom Christensen.



Olsen

And in the Lower Mainland, CUPE staffer Kathy Corrigan is seeking the nomination for the new Burnaby-Deer Lake constituency, a revision of the Burnaby-Willingdon seat currently occupied by BC Liberal MLA John Nuraney.

None of the nomination meetings had been held as *Public Employee* went to press.

didate. If that candidate happens to be a CUPE member, additional funding is available.

We've got the power

CUPE BC's first political action conference in three years (June 9-11), organized by the Political Action Committee, renewed confidence in the union's campaign organizing potential.

The conference attracted 112 delegates from CUPE locals throughout B.C., and every workshop was filled to capacity. The opening night plenary, featuring keynote speaker Dave Barrett, drew a crowd of 175, including guests from other unions as well as civic, provincial and federal politicians.

"This conference reminds us that we do have the ability to make positive change," CUPE BC secretary-treasurer Mark Hancock said in his closing remarks. "Civic politicians and MLAs know what our members can do and that we're out there to make a difference."

The conference featured a panel discussion with elected officials, a presentation on the implications of Bill 7 (see sidebar), and a luncheon with BC NDP leader Carole James followed by a Q&A session with NDP MLAs. There were six workshops: campaign management and regulations, communications and messaging, government and party structures, lobbying politicians, capacity building and campaign workers' rights and E-day skills.

Getting the vote out

The biggest challenge during the community elections is always getting the vote out. This year, with several CUPE contracts still in the first half of five-year collective agreements, there is less of a push to 'elect our bosses'.

"But if we don't get the vote out," warns PAC member Karen Dixon, "we could end up with a lot of councils and school boards that aren't so progressive."

This means paying attention to what's going on in your community and keeping other CUPE members informed. PAC member Gerrie-Lynn Ward, a receptionist at Penticton city hall (CUPE 608), is in a good position to monitor what's going on in her city.

"I attend all the council meetings, twice a month, and I read the paper to see what the city is doing with different developments," she says. "Word of mouth and talking with the membership is the best way to get the message out, but members don't necessarily like talking politics, so it can be a challenge."

Ward says the key is to keep it simple: when you're talking about civic politics, focus on how municipal government and local school board decisions affect people's lives.

With only weeks to go before the civic elections as *Public Employee* went to press, there was still a lot of work to be done. For more information about how to get involved, or to volunteer in your community, contact Heather Inglis at 604-291-1940 or via e-mail at hinglis@cupe.ca.



ON THE COVER On June 14, past and present members of CUPE 801 (Sunshine Coast School District) gathered to celebrate the local's 40th anniversary. CUPE BC secretary-treasurer Mark Hancock and family (front, second row left) brought congratulatory greetings on behalf of provincial and national members. PHOTO COURTESY OF WWW.DUANEburnett.com AND THE LOCAL (SUNSHINE COAST COMMUNITY NEWS)

PRAISE FROM CALM

TORONTO | Three CUPE BC products received honourable mentions at this year's Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) Awards.

In the publication division, *Public Employee* was recognized for photography (Nic Hume's cover photo of an aboriginal dancer, "Creating the Inner Warrior," from the Winter 2007 issue), and feature story writing (Daniel Gawthrop's "Our Communities, Our Future" from the Spring 2007 issue).

In the best flyer or brochure category, CUPE BC received

an "affectionate mention" for *The Privanator*, an anti-privatization take-off on Arnold Schwarzenegger's "The Terminator" film, conceived by Gawthrop and designed by Murray Bush.

PUBLIC WATER WIN IN CARIBOU-CHILCOTIN

WILLIAMS LAKE | Defenders of public water in B.C. have scored another win, this time in the north.

In late 2007, the mayor and council of Williams Lake proposed a P3 deal with Edmonton-based Epcor which would have seen the company



□ **FORTY-FIVE YEARS STRONG** CUPE National secretary-treasurer Claude Généreux joined Barry O'Neill, CUPE BC general vice-president Bev LaPointe, and other members and staff on September 19 as the Kootenay District Council celebrated its 45th anniversary.

CUPE OPENS TWO NEW OFFICES

COURTENAY, CRANBROOK | CUPE National secretary-treasurer Claude Généreux was on hand as the union celebrated the launch of two new area offices by holding grand openings on consecutive days in September.

The Comox Valley area office held its grand opening on September 17. The new headquarters are located at #6 - 204 North Island Highway in Courtenay.

The Cranbrook area office held its grand opening on September 18. The new office, located at 116 - 7th Avenue South in Cranbrook, is also home to CUPE 2090, City of Cranbrook (Airport - inside/outside) workers and CUPE 4165 (Southeast Kootenay School District #5).



□ **IN WITH THE NEW** CUPE 439 president Janice Wright, CUPE National secretary-treasurer Claude Généreux, and CUPE rep Trish Mack celebrate the Comox opening (left), while B.C. regional director Donn Stanley holds the ribbon for Généreux at the next day's opening in Cranbrook.

take over operation and maintenance of the community's drinking water system for a 20-year period. Williams Lake citizens rallied to the defence of public water.

After large community meetings, numerous letters to the editor and much debate, the Williams Lake mayor and council backed away from the Epcor P3 and put together a special water advisory committee. When the committee reported in July, it recommended that the water system be operated and maintained publicly. City council endorsed the recommendation, and an implementation strategy, so Williams Lake water will remain in public hands. Visit keepwaterpublic.ca.

SISTERHOOD ON CAMPUS

VICTORIA | The Union Sisterhood was alive and well in the provincial capital July 9-13 as 208 union women from B.C., California, Oregon and Washington State gathered at the University of Victoria for the Western Regional Summer

Institute for Union Women, hosted by the BC Federation of Labour.

The theme, "Women Behaving Politically: Organizing for Change", reflected labour's commitment to providing women with both the skills and strategies to understand the key issues for labour and how that understanding can help women participate in upcoming elections.



Hall



Deal

NEW EXECUTIVE FACES

CUPE BC's executive board has added two new faces since the 2007 convention. John Hall is the new alternate regional vice-president for the Okanagan, replacing Bev Petrie. Dale Deal took over last year as the alternate regional vice-president for the Kootenays, replacing Bev Free.

WANTED: PENSION ACTIVIST WITH TIME AND INTEGRITY

Municipal Pension Plan trustee's job tough, but rewarding

Maria Wahl, who has been a Municipal Pension Plan (MPP) trustee since 2000, is stepping down on December 31, 2008. CUPE BC will be appointing a new alternate trustee as a result.

The MPP's motto, "A *paycheque for life!*", pretty much sums up how significant our pensions are and how important it is that CUPE BC can appoint trustees to the joint member/employer board which manages the plan.

It's a lot to manage – with more than 220,000 members, \$25 billion in assets, and more than 50,000 retired members receiving pension benefits. No surprise, too, that trustees often cite "time commitment" and "steep learning curve" as the things that most define the experience of becoming a trustee.

A trustee's main role is to establish and implement policies to guide how the plan is administered and how funds are invested. Trustees also deal with appeals from plan members and employers. As well, CUPE trustees



□ **IN MARIA, WE TRUST** CUPE 825 president Maria Wahl (second left), a Municipal Pension Plan trustee since 2000, is stepping down at the end of this year. For the past five years since her own diagnosis with the disease, Maria and her family have raised money for the SuperWalk for Parkinsons. Here they take a rest on September 7, after raising \$15,285 for the cause.

work with the CUPE BC and Municipal Employees pension committees.

Time commitment

MPP board meetings are jam-packed with issues to be discussed and decisions to be made. Trustees should plan to spend at least 20 days per year at meetings, plus preparation and travel time. Trustees are also expected to participate in additional educational activities.

Basic skills and experience

Trustees need to have some basic skills, knowledge and experience in order to effectively participate. These include an ability to work with others and provide leadership, to solve problems and exercise sound judgment, and to communicate effectively. Trustees must be able to respect confidentiality and maintain a high standard of personal values and ethics. And, given the level at which the MPP Board of Trustees functions, new trustees must have prior experience working on a board or committee and some prior exposure to pension issues.

Brendan Dick, current chair of the MPP board, says that new CUPE trustees should come with high expectations. "The MPP is well run," he says.

"The Board is very effective; the staff are excellent; and being such a large plan, the resources available to trustees are second to none."

CUPE's Maria Wahl says that her years of pension involvement have been among the most rewarding for her. Like Dick, she emphasizes the time commitment involved. But she also says, "Never be afraid to ask a question."

For those interested in becoming a trustee, see the ad on page 19 (inside back) of this issue of *Public Employee*.

BARGAINING CONFERENCE IN 09

CUPE BC will be holding a bargaining conference at the Richmond Inn from February 17-20, 2009. The conference will be divided into sectoral sessions and regional groupings, with workshops on the full range of bargaining issues. For more information, contact the B.C. division office at 604-291-9119.

FAST FACTS

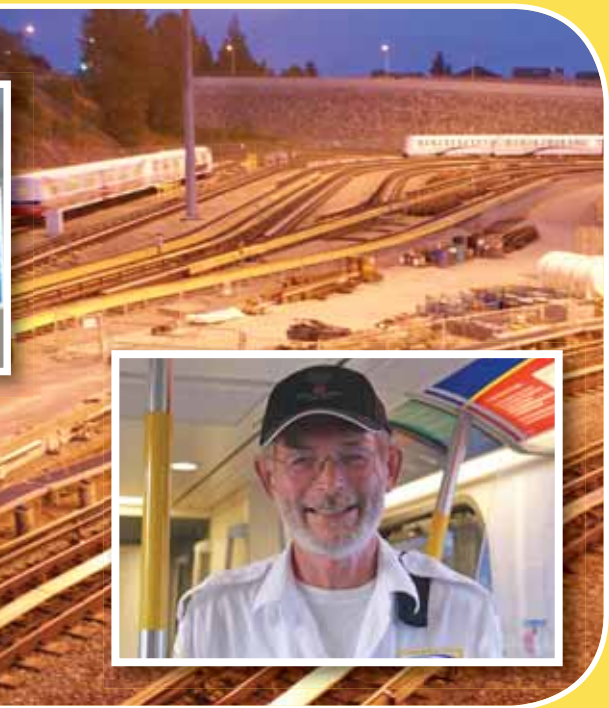
>> At least 80 per cent of the final pension benefit comes from investment returns, with 20 per cent coming from contributions

>> The MPP has 230,542 members who work for 660 employers

>> As of December 31, 2007, the Plan provided pensions to 53,879 retired members – a 6.3-per-cent increase from 2006

>> The average MPP member retires at age 59 with 18 years of service

behind THE SCENES



■ **WORKING THE RAILS** Most people don't think about who and what's involved in providing public services – like transit. *Public Employee* recently visited Lougheed SkyTrain station, SkyTrain Control Centre, and SkyTrain Operations and Maintenance Centre. Meet members of CUPE 7000 (Skytrain workers): Vehicle Technician Rick Tibbitts and SkyTrain attendants Teresa Lepard and Norman Hill.



■ **REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN** CUPE members turned out in large numbers for this year's Day of Mourning events in Vancouver (top), Pentiction (centre) and Victoria on April 28.



■ **READY FOR THEIR CLOSE-UP** CUPE 917, 951 and 4163 (University of Victoria) and CUPE 3886 (Royal Roads University) combined talent and resources on a project to build understanding and support for the often unseen work they do. UVic photographers Don Pierce and Chris Marshall, members of CUPE 951, photographed members with props from their jobs at various locations throughout the campuses. The photos were used in a series of posters themed "CUPE Works ... Building Strong Universities" that was printed on the campuses as well.



□ **IN THE MEDIA** Antonius Lam (right), vice-president of CUPE 4094 flight attendants, spoke to listeners at CHMB in Cantonese on Labour Day – talking about what it means to belong to CUPE and how unions benefit our communities. Pictured with host Tony Liaw.



□ **PRIDE IN DIVERSITY** Carrying the multi-union banner this year were CUPE 391's Peter DeGroot, CUPE BC general vice-president Carlene Keddie and secretary-treasurer Mark Hancock, CUPE 15 president Paul Faoro, CUPE 1936 vice-president Sheryl Burns, CUPE 1004 secretary-treasurer Frank Lee and COPE 491 member Karen Dixon.


Half a million turn out for Pride

VANCOUVER | CUPE activists carried the multi-union banner at this year's Pride parade on August 3, the biggest ever.

News reports said that an estimated 500,000 to 535,000 people gathered in the West End for this year's parade, making it the largest single-day festival event in Vancouver's history.

The Pride parade, part of an annual festival celebrating Vancouver's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities (and others who identify as sexual minorities), featured about 6,000 participants and 124 entries representing more than 200 community groups, businesses and other organizations.

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CUPE SPONSORSHIP BUILDS COMMUNITY

VANCOUVER | This summer's Vancouver Folk Music Festival featured the "Women's Voices Rising" workshop, sponsored by CUPE BC, CUPE National, the Hospital Employees' Union and the BC Nurses Union. Faith Nolan, a passionate political activist and musician, led the popular concert which also featured Scottish singer Maeve Mackinnon, B.C. singer/songwriter Tamara Nile, and members of Victoria's Outlaw Social.

At the end of August, CUPE National, along with CUPE 15 (Vancouver Municipal, Education and Community Workers) and CUPE 391 (Vancouver and Gibsons Public Library Employees) reached out to young workers as sponsors of Vancouver's first annual Justice Rocks event.



□ **RIGHTEOUS TUNES** Over 500 music fans enjoyed "Justice Rocks" – the first annual Vancouver music event fusing indie music with themes of social justice on August 29. And in mid-July, thanks to CUPE's co-sponsorship, Vancouver Folk Music Festival attendees were treated to *Women's Voices Rising*, a workshop led by activist and musician Faith Nolan.



The concert, organized by the Pivot Legal Society, fused indie music with themes of social justice. Over 500 people heard from an impressive line-up of local indie musicians and had the opportunity to talk to many advocacy and community groups, including CUPE.

Sponsorship not only supports community activities. It also helps build a positive public profile for our union and is another way of letting people know that we care about things that matter to them.



□ **PLAY BALL** Left, CUPE members and their families enjoyed watching the Vancouver Canadians take on the Eugene Emeralds in Northwest League baseball action on August 29. Greeting local members before the game were local presidents Cindy McQueen (CUPE 389), Alex Youngberg (CUPE 391), Paul Faoro (CUPE 15) and Mike Jackson (CUPE 1004).

NIGHT AT THE NAT

CUPE BC thanks members for their resilience in '07

VANCOUVER | CUPE BC began the Labour Day long weekend by treating more than 600 CUPE members and their families to a Vancouver Canadians baseball game at Nat Bailey Stadium in tribute to the four Vancouver area locals that took job action last summer.

The Friday night event, billed as "CUPE Day at the Nat", featured

CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill throwing the opening pitch, and between-inning entertainment that included a "CUPE tools" relay in which contestants carried books, file folders, life preservers and traffic pylons. CUPE members and their families enjoyed complimentary hot-dogs and soft drinks, along with an entertaining game.

On the field, the Canadians scored all of their runs in a wild second inning as they cruised to a 7-4 victory over the Eugene Emeralds.

□ **LOCAL INGENUITY** Blaine Brake, president of CUPE 3052, inspired local pride and contributed to community art with his entry in the annual Chetwynd International Chainsaw Carving Championship held in June. CUPE 394 (Richmond outside workers) made a big splash at Steveston's Salmon Festival Parade on July 1 with what could be the world's largest hardhat.



ALL FORE ONE

Riverside High School teacher Jamie Askew, CUPE special projects coordinator Neil Bradbury, WE Travel vice-president Gerald Roper and past CLC director and United Way representative Gordie Larkin show off their form at the Bradbury-Denofreo golf tournament, held at the Riverway Golf Course in Burnaby on September 16. The tournament, held annually since 1996, helps fund programs run by the John Howard Society of the Fraser Valley.



□ **CELEBRATING LABOUR** Michael Potts, Susan Zander, Sheryl Burns and Laurie Larsen greeted the public at CUPE BC's display area at the annual Labour Day Picnic, held at Confederation Park in Burnaby on Monday (Sept. 1).

“The carbon tax is guaranteed to negatively impact anyone who has to shovel their driveway.”

Could blind arrogance finally prove the BC Liberals’ undoing?

When CUPE members talk about BC Liberal wrongs, we often focus on the injustice: the unfairness of cutbacks, the cruelty of office closures and the meanspiritedness of lay-offs. What underlies much of the injustice is blind arrogance: because Gordon Campbell and his Cabinet are so far removed from the daily realities of working people, they appear to be indifferent to the impact their decisions have on our lives.

The most recent example is the decision not to hold a fall sitting of the Legislature – for the second year in a row – after promising openness and accountability. Liberal house leader Mike de Jong said there was no need for an additional session. What a slap in the face.

Then there’s the carbon tax, a good example of policy being announced with typical BC Liberal arrogance. Although most agree that something had to be done to counter the effects of global warming, the carbon tax was set up in such a way that unfairly punishes rural voters. It’s guaranteed to negatively impact anyone who has to shovel their driveway.

In August, the Liberals boosted salaries for 100 deputy and assistant deputy ministers by between 35 and 43 per cent. The premier has since reduced it to a maximum of 21 per cent, but only after a provincewide uproar, and he still defends the increases as necessary to stay competitive. Try telling that to the workers who have seen wage rollbacks



■ A LENGTHY LIST

Thanks to the Campbell administration’s arrogance, a lot of our time as activists is spent pushing back against BC Liberal injustice.

during the Liberal reign. Or to the large numbers of British Columbians struggling to earn a living on \$8 an hour – a minimum wage that hasn’t increased in seven years, coupled with the injustice of the \$6 an hour “training wage”. In 2008, a \$10 minimum wage would be merely symbolic, given how tiny an increase that would represent for most. But Labour Minister Iain Black refuses to address this issue.

Of course, we’ve said a great deal already about Bills 42 (Election Act amendment) and 32 (TILMA). What more can be said about a law that restricts people’s ability to criticize the government before an election? Or a law that allows corporations to override the interests of municipalities? It’s arrogance, pure and simple. Just like standing by and doing nothing as raw logs are sold across our borders.

The list goes on. Old Socreds like to say it was WAC Bennett who built this province; Bennett must be spinning in his grave as Gordon Campbell destroys it. Thankfully, we have an opportunity to turn things around next May.


Mark Hancock is secretary-treasurer of CUPE BC.



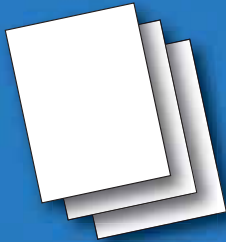
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DESIGN AND LAYOUT Working Design 

CUPE BC members are looking for a trustee for the Municipal Pension Plan.



Give a lot.

▶ **OF TIME.** Be prepared to be in meetings and other events for 20 days a year, plus preparation and travel time, for at least six years. ▶ **OF YOURSELF.** Bring your skills and experience to the table with a dynamic group of trustees. Be a leader, a problem-solver, a hard worker, and prepared for a steep learning curve.

Get a lot.

▶ **OF SATISFACTION.** Play an important role protecting and improving pension benefits for thousands of CUPE and other plan members. ▶ **OF LEARNING.** About finances, investments, benefits, and economics. ▶ **OF NEW CONTACTS, COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS.**

Get your name in.

The position starts in January 2009. Interested parties should submit resumes and other information before **November 14, 2008.**
VISIT: cupe.bc.ca/pensions

Brochure and registration information can be found on CUPE BC's website (www.cupe.bc.ca) For more information, contact registrar Judi Armstrong at 604-291-1940 or jarmstrong@cupe.ca.

CUPE's fall week-long school is fast approaching.

This year's Parksville school is offering five workshops:

Cool Action (Workers Take on Climate Change) ★ Financial Officers ★ Labour Law ★ Parliamentary Procedures and Public Speaking ★ Planning for Retirement **Join other CUPE members at Parksville's Bayside Resort and expand your activist horizons in a peaceful, seaside setting.**

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