

Members drive green victories

CUPE members are driving environmental action at work and in their communities.

On Earth Day 2010, the CUPE National Environment Committee is focusing on some of the many wins our members have made to help make the planet greener, healthier and more sustainable. These wins show that CUPE members have the power to take action on environmental issues and serve as an example to all workers.

Here in B.C., Steve Scott, CUPE 379 member and thirty year school custodian is a shining example. Steve worked with his local health and safety committee and Toxic Free Canada – with the support of the school district – to remove all toxic substances from Burnaby schools. Steve notes that the shift to non-toxic cleaning agents is having a positive impact on children, custodial staff, teachers, and the overall environment. Read [the story](#) featured in the Tyee.

Here are some other recent green victories from across Canada:

Greener meetings –

CUPE Saskatchewan is using the guidelines for greener meetings developed by the CUPE National Environment Committee. It's lowering the environmental impact of the division's meetings by eliminating disposable dishes, holding paperless meetings, and conserving water.

Greener CUPE conventions –

CUPE Alberta, on the advice of its CUPE Provincial Environment Committee, greatly improved the environmental record of the division's annual convention. Delegates were encouraged to bring their laptops and were given the option of receiving a memory stick with their convention package, rather than a binder. CUPE Alberta has committed to go completely paperless for the 2011 provincial convention.

The Hospital Employees Union's next convention in October 2010 will be a green convention: leftover food will be collected for distribution to those in need, bottled water will be banned, food supplied will adhere with the 100-mile diet guidelines of providing locally-sourced food, no disposable dishes will be used and full recycling practices will be used.

Green bargaining language –

CUPE 3942 has bargained a bicycling allowance, encouraging its members to use this non-polluting form of transportation. This is one of many examples of green provisions in collective agreements.

Greener office practices –

CUPE 417 members who work for the City of Red Deer have spurred a number of greener offices practices, such as using only higher-recycled content paper, adopting an "eco font" for printing that uses less ink and always shutting off all offices computers at the end of the day. These changes stem from the City's workplace environment committee. The City of Red Deer, along with CUPE 417 members, has put in place a wide range of environmental initiatives.

Drinking public water –

CUPE 6238 in British Columbia has successfully lobbied to have tap water as drinking water in one of three day programs and six of seven group homes where members work.

Green cleaning practices –

HEU uses only green, environmentally-friendly cleaning products in its workplace, avoiding bleach unless absolutely necessary.

Clean public water –

CUPE 3799 members who work at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George co-sponsored the drilling of a clean water well in northern Uganda. This initiative has brought a clean and public water supply to people in Uganda who previously had no access to water.

Creative environmental action –

Workers at the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation who are members of CUPE 3012 published a 2010 environmental global action calendar that is packed with information and actions related to climate change, water, energy, and other environmental issues.

Workplace climate change policy –

CUPE 3902 at the University of Toronto adopted a workplace climate change policy designed to cut greenhouse gas emissions related to workplace operations.

More CUPE green victories –

Do you want to win green victories in your CUPE workplace? The examples above provide plenty of great ideas for gains that can be won to make our workplaces, communities and planet greener. You can also use the following resources to get your workplace going green this Earth Day and every day:

[Green workplace guide](#)

[Greener conventions](#)

[Green collective agreement language](#)

[Workplace environmental audit](#)

[CUPE National's environmental course](#)