

CANADIAN  
UNION OF  
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES  
B.C. DIVISION  
SPRING 2010

# public employee



B.C., ALBERTA MEMBERS  
TALK TRADES 3



## OUR MEMBERS - OUR STRENGTH

Activists making  
a difference by  
'keeping it local'

“The ideological myth the Campbell Liberals clutch onto for dear life is only plunging B.C. further into red ink.”

## BC Liberals blow the Budget big-time... again

The BC Liberals have never missed an opportunity to trash New Democrats for their handling of the provincial budget while they were in government. It's the Big Lie we always hear from the Right: social democrats can't balance a cheque book, so why trust them with the public purse?

The Campbell Liberals are in no position to throw stones. For all their boasting about balanced budgets, the ideological myth they keep clutching onto for dear life – that cutting taxes will lead to growth in revenues – is only plunging B.C. further into red ink.

In 2009/10, after five consecutive years of operating surpluses, B.C. produced a budget shortfall of \$2.8 billion. According to a Ministry of Finance forecast, the province will endure additional deficits of \$1.7 billion, \$945 million and \$145 million from 2010/11 to 2012/13. B.C.'s total provincial-government debt – which was \$36.1 billion when the Campbell Liberals were first elected in 2001 – will reach \$47.7 billion in 2011/12 and \$55.9 billion in 2012/13.

**Independent online news source The Tyee, in its March** coverage of the budget, was one of the few media outlets to reveal just how reckless the Liberals have been with the B.C. economy.

The Tyee report reminded readers that the Corporation Capital Tax (CCT), which Finance Minister Colin Hansen's predecessor, Carole Taylor, decided in 2008 to phase out over three years, used to rake in more than \$100 million annually for the provincial treasury. The tax applied mainly to Canada's big banks and other large financial institutions – corporations that earn huge profits in B.C. but pay almost nothing in provincial corporate income taxes.

To lessen the impact of losing the CCT, Taylor introduced a levy called the Financial Institutions Minimum Tax (FIMT). This tax was supposed to ensure that Canada's banks, insurance companies and trusts continued to make at least minimal payments to the treasury. The FIMT was supposed to begin in 2010/11, and total revenues were to be



□ **LOCAL HERO** Activists like CUPE 439 president Janice Wright and members of the Comox local, featured in this issue, could teach the Campbell Liberals a thing or two about supporting the B.C. economy.

revealed in Hansen's budget for this year. But they weren't: the government decided to repeal the FIMT even before it could take effect.

Surprise, surprise: the big banks are allowed to keep everything and pay nothing to Victoria.

**To attract revenue, the Liberals are depending on the** Harmonized Sales Tax. The fact that most British Columbians are opposed to the HST is of no concern to the Liberals. Converting HST revenues into health care services is a cynical tax shift that only diverts other money away from health care that should have been committed, HST or not.

So now we know that the Liberals not only fail to restore public services they've cut and continue to privatize wherever they can; they also don't have a clue how to raise revenue for this province.

**Barry O'Neill is president of CUPE BC.**



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## PROVINCE SENDS PARAMEDICS TO HEALTH SECTOR

**VICTORIA** | The BC Liberals have moved to break up the unified bargaining unit for the province's 3,600 ambulance paramedics.

The government announced on March 31 that it had decided against creating a bargaining unit specifically for paramedics. The decision, following what is expected to be a lengthy hearing before the BC Labour Relations Board, will send paramedics into one or more of five health-sector bargaining units: Nurses, Health Services – Facilities, Health Services – Community, Health Science Professionals (paramedicals), and or Residents.



□ **OLYMPIAN NEGLECT** During the Bill 21 rallies, CUPE 873 ambulance paramedics challenged the government's failure to fix the system by reducing wait times.

"If the BC Liberals showed the same level of respect for ambulance paramedics that the people of B.C. have, this would not happen," said CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill. "Last year, the Liberals forced an end to a legal strike by paramedics – now they are forcing an end to paramedics' autonomy."

CUPE 873 president John Strohmaier said the decision came as no surprise, given how the government had "consistently ignored" CUPE's calls to address the critical condition of ambulance services.



□ **MORE TRADES, LESS TILMA** At the first B.C.-Alberta Trades and Maintenance Conference in January, B.C. delegates Bryan Murphy (far left) and Leah Murray (centre) compared notes with Alberta's John Marler, Loren Johnson and Jason Fenske.

## Skilled trades activists connect

### B.C., Alberta hold first joint CUPE trades event

**CALGARY** | When CUPE members from B.C. and Alberta got together for the first bi-provincial trades and maintenance conference earlier this year, the result was a happier development for the workers than the trade deal between their respective governments.

The conference, held in Calgary from January 15-17, focused on various issues facing the trades in both provinces, including the de-skilling and de-regulating of trades groups, the shortage of skilled trades people and the industries' desire to reduce labour costs. It also examined the impact on

the sector of the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) between B.C. and Alberta.

"Our delegation took advantage of several workshops made available, including health and safety, changes in legislation and the effects of infrastructure and capital projects on trades," said CUPE 116 carpenter Leah Murray, in a report on the conference she wrote for her local newsletter.

Also a panelist speaking on her experience as a woman in the trades, Murray encouraged conference delegates to work with their employers to promote apprenticeship programs in their workplaces and strengthen the language of their collective agreements.

## Community Health locals say "no"

All four CUPE Community Health sector Locals (CUPE 4816, 3495, 15, and 3403-01) soundly rejected the tentative agreement reached with the Health Employer's Association (HEABC) and the BCGEU in early January. The BCGEU announced on March 2 that the agreement was ratified.

CUPE members did not support the agreement, which offered no general

wage increases for two years and traded off hard-won existing benefits for new benefits.

CUPE's Community Health sector has launched a public relations campaign to stop further cuts and to inform British Columbians about community health services that people in every community rely on.

## 66 VOICES

**“It’s a taxpayer rip-off. Once you build in a profit motive, it has to cost more. That’s just logic and that’s not a good business model for taxpayers.”**

CUPE 1978’s “Keep it Public” campaign coordinator, Kim Manton, on a P3 option for the Capital Regional District’s proposed new sewage treatment system.

*Oak Bay News*, Tuesday, January 12, 2010.

**“We believe this to be a simple and very reasonable request and are puzzled by council’s silence.”**

CUPE 608 president Patti Finch, on her union’s inquiry to Penticton city council as to whether 36 soon-to-be-laid-off employees would get their jobs back once a \$23.3 million pool upgrade is done.

*Penticton Herald*, Friday February 19, 2010.

**“What you are essentially faced with is deciding which employees to throw into the ocean to keep the lifeboat from sinking.”**

CUPE 716 president June Kaiser, on a \$5-9 million budget shortfall in Richmond School District that would allow district staff and trustees only two weeks to decide where layoffs should occur.

*Richmond News*, Wednesday, March 3, 2010.

**“We always wind up being on the bottom of the ladder, and we’re tired of it.”**

CUPE 411 president Laura Dean, on a proposal to save Chilliwack school district \$161,000 by extending the spring break by one week – thus costing support staff a week of wages and benefits.

*Chilliwack Progress*, Tuesday February 2, 2010.

**“It’s another mechanism for (the province) to bluff everyone in the unknowing public to what is actually going on.”**

CUPE 873 regional vice-president John Hosie, on an industrial inquiry report that claims B.C. paramedics are the highest paid in the country – but quotes only the maximum full-time wages for employees with 20 to 30 years’ service.

*Parksville-Qualicum Beach News*, Monday, February 1, 2010.

**“Because our union and library management have developed a good working relationship, we reached this agreement in an unprecedented five meetings.”**

CUPE 1698 president Laurie Dyck, on a three-year collective agreement with the Fraser Valley Regional Library that will see CUPE members receive a nine-per-cent raise over three years.

*Hope Standard*, Thursday, January 14, 2010.



■ **BREAD AND ROSES** CUPE’s Metro Council in Vancouver sponsored a lunch event in the Downtown Eastside on International Women’s Day. On hand March 8 to pass out takeaway snacks after the event were CUPE BC community organizer Suzan Zander, CUPE 1936 vice-president Sheryl Burns, CUPE BC general vice-president Cindy McQueen, CUPE 15 secretary-treasurer Betty McGee, CUPE childcare organizer Randi Gurholt-Seary, CUPE 391 president Alexandra Youngberg, and CUPE 23 member Sarah Bjorknas.



## Privatization, cutbacks continue under Liberals

### Budget reveals no end to Gordon Campbell’s tax-cutting agenda

**VICTORIA** | With its first post-Olympics budget, the BC Liberal government is worsening economic polarization and providing little relief to rural communities suffering from the economic crisis, says CUPE BC.

“B.C.’s finance minister boasts about this province having the lowest corporate tax rate in the G7. That’s nothing to be proud of when we also have the highest child poverty rate in Canada,” said CUPE BC president Barry O’Neill.

The 2010 budget allocates \$1.8 billion for post-secondary funding in 2010/11 – the same as last year. Furthermore, last year’s cuts to funding for public libraries are not being restored; nor are the annual facilities grants for the K-12 sector being fully restored.

Meanwhile, this year’s Speech from the Throne declared the government’s plans to expand on existing contracts “with new P3s in transportation, health delivery, education support services,” and more.

“British Columbians need an explanation for why this government continues to ignore the glaring evidence that P3s don’t work,” said O’Neill.

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## B.C. AUDITOR GENERAL 'SHOULD REVIEW P3S'

The bad news keeps on coming for privatization proponents, as analysis questioning public private partnerships (P3s) by the Quebec Auditor General has added to that done in Ontario.

Both the Ontario and Quebec Auditors General question key aspects of P3s related to risk transfer and financing. The Quebec Auditor General concludes that agencies like Partnerships BC offer supposedly independent analysis while being closely involved in the preparation of proposals that support privatization over public operation.

In addition to critiques from other provinces, B.C. economist Marvin Shaffer and forensic accountants Ron Parks and Rosanne Terhart have provided assessments that question the B.C. government claim that P3s save money. CUPE BC has encouraged B.C.'s Auditor General to pursue a review of the province's public-private partnerships (P3) process.

## MUNI WORKERS TO MEET

CUPE's Western Canadian Municipal Workers' Conference is being held in Regina, Saskatchewan from June 10-12. For more information, visit [www.smw.cupe.ca](http://www.smw.cupe.ca).

## CUPE BC joins anti-HST campaign

CUPE members know the importance of tax revenues to government: without them, there would be no public services at all. So we don't enter into anti-tax campaigns lightly.

But taxes need to be fair, and the BC Liberals' new Harmonized Sales Tax, which kicks in on July 1, is blatantly unfair. It will transfer almost \$2 billion



□ **HARM REDUCTION WORKS** More than 150 people stood up for health services in Vancouver's downtown eastside on February 10, sending Stephen Harper a message that "Insite saves lives."

## Supporters rally to defend Insite

### Harper determined to kill valuable service

**VANCOUVER** | CUPE members from Locals 1004 and 15 joined community residents, clients and the general public at a February 10 rally in support of Insite, North America's only supervised injection site.

The impromptu rally protested Prime Minister Stephen Harper's call for a Supreme Court of Canada ruling – a bid to overturn previous court rulings and gain federal jurisdiction over Insite. Harper has been trying to close the doors on this community health initiative for four years.

CUPE National president Paul Moist called on the prime minister to "put personal ideology aside and listen to the hard scientific evidence that supports the need for a service like Insite in this community."

Activists said they would use whatever opportunity they can to send the federal government the message that Insite saves lives and is crucial to the Downtown Eastside community.

CUPE represents 170 members who provide services to PHS Community Services (formerly Portland Hotel Society) in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.



□ **ON THE SAME PAGE** Barry O'Neill and NDP President Moe Sihota agree that the \$2 billion HST tax grab will hurt B.C. families.

per year in tax obligations from corporations to families and individuals. And you'll pay the HST on almost every purchase you can imagine.

CUPE BC opposes the HST and is fight-

ing, with the NDP and other groups, to stop it. Keep an eye on [www.cupe.bc.ca](http://www.cupe.bc.ca) for news on how we'll take part, and check out [www.fighthst.com](http://www.fighthst.com) for more information on the campaign. In the meantime, call or write a BC Liberal MLA to ask them why they've broken their election promise not to bring in the HST.



❑ **STRONG SUPPORT** Public sewage activists rally before the first vote on whether sewage treatment in Greater Victoria will be public or private.

## CAPITAL REGION CAMPAIGN

# Win for public sewage treatment

**VICTORIA** | Residents of Greater Victoria now have the option of choosing fully public sewage treatment and resource recovery.

After three years of planning, Capital Regional District (CRD) directors on March 31 gave final approval to a business case that will see public operation in at least five, and possibly all seven communities working to develop new sewage treatment and resource recovery.

CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill said that while there is more to do, the

fact that citizens of the region now have the possibility of full public operation is a major victory.

Mauricio Navarette, president of CUPE 1978 which represents CRD workers, said that the work of CUPE's 'Keep it Public' campaign, coordinated by Kim Manton, along with the Greater Victoria Water Watch Coalition and the Council of Canadians has gone a long way to ensuring public and environmentally sound sewage treatment.

More information is available at [keep-waterpublic.ca](http://keep-waterpublic.ca).

## Debunking Gov't spin on K-12 funding

While the 2010 provincial budget showed that government has felt some heat on education underfunding, there was little new commitment to fix the many problems facing public schools.

Last year's cancelled Annual Facilities Grant was partially restored, with a \$110 million "annual" allocation now split over two school years, as well as new funding for teacher salaries and full-day

kindergarten. But there was no real effort to address a mounting funding shortfall that secretary-treasurers estimate to be approaching \$300 million.

CUPE is working with the BC Teachers' Federation to provide a new look at the education funding crisis, and take on the "highest funding ever" spin from government MLAs with an analysis of how provincial funding fails to pay for new costs faced by districts.

Go to [www.cupe.bc.ca/cupe-sectors/k-12](http://www.cupe.bc.ca/cupe-sectors/k-12) for more information.

## University workers boost their profile

CUPE's 14,000 university sector workers in British Columbia are increasing their profile this year, through local and provincial campaigns.

The provincial campaign, *Universities Work Because We Do*, is overseen by the Universities Coordinated Bargaining Committee (UCBC), with 10 locals at six public universities participating.

UCBC co-chair Steve Storch, who is president of CUPE 3799 at the University of Northern BC, says that with collective agreements expiring between March and August 2010, it is important for CUPE locals to engage with their campuses and communities.

Colleen Garbe, president of CUPE 116 at UBC and UCBC co-chair, says that CUPE members are a key to strong and sustainable universities in B.C. "We need to make sure the services we provide and the work we do are on the radar when governments and boards of governors develop policies and funding priorities," she says.

The UCBC initiative, funded by CUPE National and university locals, includes the [universitieswork.ca](http://universitieswork.ca) website and a sector newsletter – *The University Worker*.



**OH&S  
CONFERENCE**

CUPE BC's Occupational Health & Safety conference will be held in October.

The theme will encompass respectful workplaces. Conference location is to be announced.



□ **A BIGGER RAINBOW** The new CARD and four working groups for equality are ready to take on new challenges in fighting discrimination.

## EQUALITY COMMITTEE STRENGTHENED

**BURNABY** | CUPE BC's **Committee Against Racism and Discrimination (CARD)** held its first meeting of the year on March 2 rejuvenated by a new structure that further empowers all its members.

Thanks to a resolution at last year's convention, the CARD will now pursue its equality agenda with four working groups representing each category in its mandate: workers of colour, aboriginal workers, workers with disabilities, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans workers. Representatives of each working group will report back to CARD.

Among other projects, the CARD and working groups discussed plans for an equality conference in the fall.

## FIRST AGREEMENT FOR LIBRARY WORKERS

**CRESTON** | The 13 members of **CUPE 4959** who work at **Creston Public Library** look forward to serving the public in a healthy working environment, thanks to a first collective agreement that includes wage

increases, job security provisions and a new RRSP benefit.

The new agreement received 100 per cent support from the membership. Under the contract, CUPE 4959 members retain all benefits, along with a new RRSP benefit of 8 per cent of gross earnings.

The contract also includes job security provisions such as contracting out language and a seniority clause.

## LOCAL SERVICE = BETTER SERVICE

**CUPE 1767 members** are fighting to keep services local as BC Assessment plans to close Vernon and Penticton offices and send residents to Kelowna for all assessment services.

Local assessments are more accurate and equitable, and relocating will cost taxpayers more while hurting local business and the economy, says **CUPE 1767**.

"More than 300 people come into our offices during winter to deal with issues," said **CUPE 1767 president Kevin McPhail**. "It's not right to expect them to drive on bad roads to have their questions answered face-to-face."

The Local is encouraging people to sign their online petition at [cupe.bc.ca/news.1018](http://cupe.bc.ca/news.1018).

## NO MORE BOTTLED WATER

**NEW WESTMINSTER** | In January the **New Westminister Board of Education** voted unanimously to phase out bottled water in school facilities and promote public water through educational material, including new curricula on the environmental and health benefits of tap versus bottled water.

The motion, brought forward by trustee **Lori Watt**, is in line with initiatives by Metro Vancouver and other municipalities promoting municipal water over private bottled water. **CUPE 409 president Marcel Marsolais** says that his members are strong advocates for the complete elimination of bottled water.

## LOCAL DEFENDS PUBLIC SERVICES

**WHITE ROCK** | Concerned that the municipality was chipping away at public services, **CUPE 402-01 civic workers** sprung into action when Council put out a Request for Qualifications on garbage col-

lection and recycling earlier this year.

CUPE 402-01 members talked to residents at a local grocery store where they gave out coffee, cookies, and decals to put on their garbage cans or in car windows to show support for public services. "This was a great opportunity for the public to meet our members, who provide such good public service to White Rock," said CUPE 402-01 president **Mike Guraliuk**.

## HAITI ACTIVIST TO ADDRESS CONVENTION

The international speaker for CUPE BC's 47th annual convention (April 21 – 24) is **Dukens Raphael**, general secretary of the **Confederation of Public and Private Sector Workers in Haiti**.

Brother Raphael will provide an update for delegates about the current state of his country following the devastating January 13 earthquake, including a summary of humanitarian relief efforts, the importance of the public sector in the relief, and the role of the Haitian people in directing the relief and reconstruction efforts.

This year's convention will also feature a forum on the **Year of the Steward**, highlighting the important role that stewards play in our union.



■ **CARING COMMUNITY** CUPE locals representing 2,500 community social services workers are once again joining with other unions and community partners to promote March as Community Social Services Awareness Month.

“CUPE National specialists provide first-class assistance through innovative campaigns – and, at times, creative advice.”

## Tough bargaining? We’ve got the resources

Negotiations have begun across the B.C. public sector, and CUPE members have a stake at most of the bargaining tables.

As expected, the government is holding fast to a zero cost and wage mandate, which means that we have and will continue to face monumental challenges at all bargaining tables, with few options for improving and in some cases, maintaining, working conditions, benefits and wages.

We do have resources, however, and our sector coordinators are working hard to ensure that information is available to all locals and any decisions are made from a well-informed base. This has been true in the tumultuous community health and community social services negotiations, where bargainers and staff have spent long hours and more than a few weekends dealing with marathon bargaining sessions, short notice hearings, and strategy sessions.

CUPE National specialists remain available in research, communications, job evaluation, health and safety, education, legal, organizing, and legislative coordination to provide first-class assistance to locals through innovative campaigns – and, at times, creative advice.

**Our organization – like those around us – is currently in** the midst of a sea change, with high staff turnover due mainly to well-deserved retirements. Add to this the positive fact that CUPE’s 2010 budget provides for more staff and it is clear we are in a time of growth and change.

CUPE locals will likely see more temporary representatives assigned to them for the next while, due to posting procedures, short notice retirements, vacations, and leaves related to illness, maternity and other events. Thus we are beginning a new servicing representative training program in June to ensure we continue to have qualified representatives available to continue to provide a high level of service to members.

We will give new and temporary representatives mentoring and assistance to ensure they get up to speed on the



□ **UP AND COMER** Temporary staff reps like Valarie Nickel bring new perspectives and energy as they provide servicing assistance to CUPE’s growing number of locals.

issues quickly. Our temporary employees are eager to gain experience, given that they will represent the future of CUPE in assisting Locals. I truly appreciate the patience and cooperation of locals who often greatly assist in helping CUPE members to leave worksites on short notice for temporary staff assignments.

**Along with new people, we have new technology.** Look for a new province-wide videoconferencing network this spring. We hope to ensure timely and affordable conferencing capabilities when quick informed decisions are required for bargaining and other activities.

We work closely with CUPE BC and our Strong Communities Working Group to ensure that our message gets out and our members are engaged. Raising our profile is key in our ongoing drive to improve health, education, and community services for British Columbians. Given all of this, we are well-placed to meet the challenges we face.

**Robin Jones is temporary director for CUPE’s British Columbia region.**



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After causing a global meltdown with speculative capitalism and de-regulation policies, the corporate sector now wants working people to feel its pain.

# Workers left to clean up corporate mess

by Toby Sanger

Most of us know the type from our childhood: the brash, spoiled rich kids who hold a big party, destroy some public property and then try to fix the blame on others, leaving the rest of us to clean up the mess.

Well, those rich kids have grown up. But they're still behaving the same.

The difference now is that their 'party' lasted for decades before coming to an end – or brief interruption – with the financial crash in 2008. This time, it wasn't just the local community centre they damaged, but the world economy. With governments coming to the rescue to prevent the whole planet from sinking into depression, the cost of fixing that damage is trillions of dollars worldwide – more than \$100 billion in Canada alone.

Some of those responsible have actually confessed to their role in the damage. The head of the Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation admitted in January 2009: "This global crisis ... was created by the system itself; by the system which we created; and by a toxic combination of unethical behavior by companies and a faulty regulation and supervision of their activities."

Alan Greenspan, the libertarian former head of the US Federal Reserve, confessed under questioning to the U.S. Congress that his free market de-regulation approach turned out to be flawed. And some investment bank CEOs have even apologized for their part in causing the economic crisis.

A few feeble apologies may be one thing. But once it comes time to pay, it's a different story. The corporate lobby and their ideological henchmen in government are right back to their old tricks: trying to force the rest of us not only to pay for the crisis and the cost of the bailout, but also to pay in advance for more of their bankrupt economic policies.

All of a sudden they're sounding alarm bells about deficits they created. They insist that the



rest of us make sacrifices and accept lower wages and reduced public services to pay for them. Never mind that Canada is still in excellent fiscal shape – nor that, if government hadn't severely cut corporate and income tax and created tens of billions in tax loopholes, we wouldn't have deficits to worry about.

Despite rock bottom corporate tax rates and record profits, banks and many corporations still aren't making adequate real productive investments in our economy. They still want their party to continue by profiting off speculation, cheap resource extraction, investments overseas, or ripping off the public through privatization and P3s. This may be their way of maximizing their short term profits, but it certainly isn't the way to create a strong economy or strong communities. These policies will ultimately just create another boom and bust – and guess who will be forced to pay for it again?

What we need are more public services, not less, to build for the future. We need jobs with decent wages and benefits to create healthy communities. We need investments in productive areas and not more speculation or exploitation. And we need a smarter and fairer tax system to pay for this.

Most importantly, we need to take back control of our economy from these overgrown delinquents, whose policies have been thoroughly – and deservedly – discredited.

**Toby Sanger is a staff economist for CUPE, based in Ottawa.**

**All of a sudden they're sounding alarm bells about deficits they created.**





**COVER STORY** CUPE 439 members Dave and Sharon Woodley (back row), Bunny Price, Robert Bellmore and Louise Nilson (front) pose at Anderton Therapeutic Gardens in Courtenay. NORMAN J. WILSON PHOTO

## OUR MEMBERS OUR STRENGTH

# Activists making a difference by **keeping it local**

**COMOX** | Janice Wright knew she was sending a strong message with the bag lunch her local arranged for nearly 350 union sisters and brothers on February 8.



The CUPE 439 president, organizer of Professional Development Day activities for School District 71 support staff, made sure that all the food purchased for the event – from organic bison and chicken salad sandwiches to various cheeses, salads, desserts and beverages – was locally produced.

As if to put an accent on the sustainability theme, the lunches were packed in recyclable thermal zipper bags bearing the CUPE 439 logo, and the dinnerware and cutlery were all biodegradable – including plates made from potato and ‘plastic’ cups made from corn product.

The buy local theme for PD Day fit nicely with the local first theme of CUPE BC president Barry O’Neill’s guest speech that morning. O’Neill’s own personal commitment – to devote at least 10 per cent of his household income to local food stores – resonated with his fellow CUPE members.

“Our local has always been really strong on the idea

of supporting local business and buying local food,” says Wright. “We know that we can make a big difference, not only for our own personal health but for the health of our community, by buying local.”

### Out in the community

Buying local is not the only way that CUPE 439 and other union activists throughout B.C. have had a positive impact on their local communities.

CUPE 439 members also volunteer their services at the Anderton Therapeutic Gardens, a society-run community space that promotes wellness and healing for people of all ages and abilities. At the gardens, which are wheelchair accessible and have raised garden beds that are also accessible to people with walkers, CUPE 439 has held community action days in which local members have weeded the entire garden, built a stage and a teahouse, or teamed up with



□ **MAKING THINGS BETTER** Volunteers with the Peninsula Streams Society create an English Ivy log as part of habitat preservation efforts in Ardmore, North Saanich.



□ **LOCAL LUNCH**  
 CUPE 439 vice president Cathy Guimond and president Janice Wright pose with CUPE BC's community organizer Susan Zander at the local's Professional Development Day on February 8.

the civic local, CUPE 556, to make a large pond.

In Saanich school district, CUPE 441 members volunteer for the Peninsula Streams Society, which helps restore streams through tree planting, invasive species removal, and other tasks.

"I would really recommend this for anyone looking for some involvement," says CUPE 441's Colleen Ozawa. "It is great: outside and with nice people, and it is about *our* water."

### Leading by example

Recent issues of *Public Employee* have highlighted the efforts of various CUPE activists whose commitment to sustainability is having a positive impact at a local level. CUPE 105 members in Port Clements on Haida Gwaii, and CUPE 4728 members in Grand Forks, are leading recycling efforts in their respective communities. (CUPE 4728 was featured in last year's spring issue for its organic composting program.)

Other CUPE civic and school locals are pushing their councils and school districts to adopt bottled water bans for their communities.

### From May Day to Community Action Day

This year on May 1, CUPE BC is asking members to mark International Workers Day by celebrating their presence in and involvement with the communities where they live and work.

In 2004, CUPE locals and district

councils celebrated May Day across the province by organizing food and clothing drives, hosting barbecues, donating free access to community centre facilities, and hosting many other events. Proceeds from the drives and barbecues were made to local community organizations.

"As workers, we must recognize and commemorate May Day not only for its historical significance, but also as a time to celebrate the contributions of workers today," says O'Neill.

"We can build on our successful events of 2004 by again giving back to the communities we live and work in."

This year, says O'Neill, CUPE BC is asking its locals and district councils to help turn May Day into "Community Action Day."

Among the various events, CUPE 2145 (Bulkley Valley Schools) is planning a "Connecting with Seniors" Day. Volunteers organized by the local will help seniors with spring yard work, larger cleanup tasks, repairs, visits and reading. CUPE 4879 (Thompson Rivers University Local) will conduct a food bank drive, with various drop-off locations around the TRU campus. And CUPE Locals 728 and 402 (Surrey Schools and Municipal) will join forces to volunteer at a local food bank.

"These are just a few examples of the many ways our members show their commitment to their communities throughout B.C., and how they can make a difference," says O'Neill.

## CONVENTION DELEGATES ASKED TO SUPPORT PASSAGE TRANSITION HOUSE

CUPE BC called on delegates to the annual division convention (April 21 – 24) to support the Northern Society of Domestic Peace, which runs the Passage Transition House in Smithers.

Passage, the only transition house in the Northern Interior, has since 1989 offered a safe and supportive emergency residential and drop-in service in the Bulkley Valley for women and children experiencing domestic violence, abuse and/or crises in their lives.

"CUPE BC is encouraging every convention delegate to help out by bringing a new item from a list of necessities we've sent out," said secretary-treasurer Mark Hancock. "This includes everything from sheets and pajamas for both women and children, towels, toothbrushes, socks, slippers and mittens to colouring books and small toys."

CUPE BC issues a similar call to convention delegates each year to assist a local organization that helps people in distress.

For more information on the Northern Society of Domestic Peace and Passage House, visit [www.domesticpeace.ca](http://www.domesticpeace.ca).





▣ **QUICK RESPONSE** B.C. ambulance paramedics Kevin Sanford and Kathy Harms attend to an injured victim of the Jan. 13 earthquake in Haiti. The CUPE 873 members were stationed at the Canadian Medical Assistance Team field hospital in Leogane, Haiti.

## Help for Haiti CUPE members donate, paramedics lend a hand

The devastating earthquake that leveled so much of the impoverished nation of Haiti on January 13 captured headlines around the world. Canadians from all walks of life responded with amazing generosity, donating millions of dollars to assist in the relief effort.

CUPE locals and members throughout B.C. and across the country pledged funds to help Haiti. CUPE BC donated \$15,000 through Oxfam Quebec.

A number of CUPE 873 members from the Ambulance Paramedics of BC responded to the crisis by flying to Leogane, Haiti, to assist victims. The paramedics volunteer with a non-governmental organization called Canadian Medical Assistance Teams ([www.canadianmedicalteams.org](http://www.canadianmedicalteams.org)).

During the three-week deployment, the CUPE 873 members worked with a team of 11 healthcare professionals staffing a field hospital in Leogane, where they treated from 120 to 200 patients a day.

Paramedics Bill Coltart, Chris Kaley and Ryan Thorburn served on the Assessment Team while Martin Metz and Kelly Churchill served on Team 1, Kevin Sanford and Kathy Harms on Team 2, and Gerry Campbell on Team 3.



**TIDE OF PINK** CUPE members throughout B.C. wore pink shirts on February 26 and April 14 to oppose bullying. Stop Bullying Day in B.C. was rescheduled because of the Olympics, but CUPE members took part on both days. Please send photos to [jszliske@telus.net](mailto:jszliske@telus.net). They will be posted on [www.cupe.bc.ca/committees/occupational-health-and-safety](http://www.cupe.bc.ca/committees/occupational-health-and-safety).



▣ **GIVING SPIRIT** CUPE 339 president Rocco Mastrobuono presents \$1,000 cheque to Bryna Idler, Hospital Foundation Coordinator, to go towards the Foundation's CT Scan fundraising campaign in Trail (left), while CUPE 2769 vice-president Allison Pringle presents \$200 cheque to Heather Warwick from the Gold River Food Bank, to assist with food hampers for needy families.

## Happy Trails to Gorman, Malone

B.C. regional staff recently honoured two long-time staff reps who are retiring this year.

Jim Gorman spent 10 years with CUPE 15 as a staff rep and business manager and 12 years at B.C. regional office—the final eight as servicing rep for public library locals in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley and Gibsons, and as sector coordinator for libraries. Also the staff advisor to CUPE BC's International Solidarity committee, Jim was an active participant in CoDevelopment Canada and Café Etico's worker-to-worker programs in Latin America, China and the Thai-Burma border.

Wayne Malone spent 27 years as a CUPE servicing representative, the last 20 in Cranbrook after stints in Vancouver and Regina. Wayne says he's grateful to have had the opportunity to work with some outstanding trade unionist and local activists who, in many cases,



**GOING OUT AS WINNERS** At their retirement dinner in Victoria, on the eve of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, staff reps Jim Gorman and Wayne Malone were presented with gold medals for outstanding service by CUPE's assistant regional director in B.C., Anne Coupland.

became life-long friends. He counts the mobilization of thousands of workers during Operation Solidarity in 1983 as one of the most profound moments of his working life.



## CUPE 118 scores in Port Alberni

**PORT ALBERNI** | CUPE 118, municipal workers in Port Alberni, sponsored the first playoff hockey game of the Alberni Valley Bulldogs on March 9 as part of their action to build community support for public services.

The Local welcomed local hockey fans at the CUPE booth that featured photos of members at work in Port Alberni taken by CUPE 118 member Ryan Foster.



**GO BULLDOGS!** Janine Langford and Bernie, the Bulldogs' mascot, join forces at CUPE 118's booth during the first play-off game of the Alberni Valley Bulldogs.

Fans were able to pick up decals in support of public services, get information on what CUPE does, and enter a draw for a prize package from the CUPE BC boutique. CUPE 118 provided prizes and sponsored a paper airplane toss during the first intermission.

## NEW TREK PLANNED AS 'ON TO OTTAWA' TURNS 75

This June marks the 75th anniversary of the 1935 'On to Ottawa' Trek, in which thousands of young unemployed workers were inspired to climb atop box cars and personally deliver their demand for "work and wages" to the federal government.

Although the trek was violently crushed by the infamous police riot in Regina on Dominion Day 1935, the courageous protest led to a prime minister's defeat and better conditions for working people. One of the trekkers was Jack Phillips, later an executive member of the municipal local that would become CUPE 1004.

## CUPE CUSTODIAN... AND HIP HOP ARTIST

Zane Gold is a school custodian with big dreams. A CUPE 523 member in Penticton schools since 1999, he is also an up-and-coming hip-hop artist.

With a long list of awards under his belt, Zane spoke recently with CUPE Communications about the journey that led to his current chart topper 'Like a Dime.' With lots of support from friends and family, including his dad who worked for the Okanagan-Skaha school district for 25 years, Zane's future looks pretty bright. Read the full interview at [www.cupe.bc.ca/committees/young-workers-task-force](http://www.cupe.bc.ca/committees/young-workers-task-force).



□ **ON THE CHARTS** CUPE 523 member Zane Gold is receiving many accolades for his music, including the hit "Like a Dime."

[cupe.bc.ca/committees/young-workers-task-force](http://www.cupe.bc.ca/committees/young-workers-task-force).

Check Zane's music out at [zaneworld.com](http://zaneworld.com) and at [zanegold.com](http://zanegold.com).



□ **DÉJÀ VU, 2010?** Times may have changed, but Ottawa still neglects the homeless and unemployed.

On Sunday June 6, the On to Ottawa Historical Society will celebrate the trek's 75th anniversary with various activities. The Society has joined forces with the Impact on Communities Coalition, which is organizing its own trek to Ottawa to draw attention to homelessness in Vancouver. The group has organized a 'rolling hunger strike' that will end when the trek gets to Ottawa.

The new trekkers expect a resounding send-off from those attending the anniversary celebrations in Crab Park.

Watch for June 6 event updates at [www.ontoottawa.ca](http://www.ontoottawa.ca) and <http://iocc.ca>.

## CUPE 391 screens edgy feature film

**VANCOUVER** | CUPE 391 turned some heads on January 10 with a sneak preview of their film, "Mistress Superior," the first feature-length comedy created by a CUPE local.

The story, which centres around a dominatrix who has lost her mean streak, was inspired by the 2007

municipal strike, during which CUPE 391 members used satirical videos to tell their stories.

David Philip, the brainchild behind "Mistress Superior", wrote the script with fellow library workers in mind.

Philip plans to enter the film in both the Toronto and Vancouver Film Festivals, as well as at Cannes.

For more information, visit [www.mistresssuperior.com](http://www.mistresssuperior.com).

“Can the BC Liberals truly look you straight in the eye and say that bringing back the corporate vote in civic elections will make local democracy stronger?”

## Let's give a thumbs-down to the corporate vote

At the Union of BC Municipalities convention last October, Premier Gordon Campbell announced a joint task force with the UBCM to review the regulation of local government elections in B.C. While much, if not all, of the media coverage of the announcement focused on the financial aspects of the review, Campbell's speech signaled his intention to make civic elections in British Columbia unique by allowing businesses and corporations the right to vote.

Before commenting on that bad idea, I should point out that CUPE BC agrees that the local election process needs to be reviewed. For example, we are concerned about the issues of caps in municipal election spending, and restrictions on donations. While we agree that there should be caps in place, the debate surrounds how big the caps should be. Also, if corporations and unions are barred from financially supporting candidates, what other provisions would be put in place so that candidates can raise money in their local election campaigns?

How dare the BC Liberals impose restrictions on school boards and municipalities that they wouldn't impose on themselves? There's no tax benefit for municipal election donations, as there is for provincial elections. And provincial candidates have no financing limit for donations, unlike local elections candidates. Without some fair rules that apply to everyone, we'll only see political apathy increase.

In 2008, an average of just 27 per cent of eligible voters turned out to vote. That's pathetic, and it shows how much work needs to be done to make local elections truly repre-



❑ **WRONG APPROACH** The Liberals should be looking at ways to increase voter turnout. Bringing back the corporate vote is not the way to do it.

sentative. Democracy is in serious trouble if only one out of four of us bothers to vote. But rather than examining that issue, the BC Liberals think the answer to steadily decreasing voter turnout is to allow corporations to vote. Restoring this practice would make our province the only jurisdiction in North America to allow it.

Business lobby groups have been hard at work with the Liberals to shift an ever-increasing proportion of property tax obligations to individuals and away from business and industry. That's put enormous pressures on local governments – particularly in rural and resource-dependent communities like Port Alberni, where industry has arbitrarily refused to pay its full fair share of taxes. In Port Alberni, this could mean a 23-per-cent increase in property taxes for citizens.

Can the BC Liberals truly look you straight in the eye and say that bringing back the corporate vote in civic elections will make local democracy stronger? Contact one of their MLAs and ask them why they're planning to do this.

Mark Hancock is secretary-treasurer of CUPE BC.



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As it's the Year of the Steward, we will once again be offering the stewarding learning series (certificate program) with seven different modules.

The remainder of the workshops will be determined in consultation with the CUPE BC education committee following the Naramata school in May.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
PLEASE CONTACT

CUPE Education representative  
Greg Burkitt at 604-291-1940  
ext. 272 or via e-mail at  
[gburkitt@cupe.ca](mailto:gburkitt@cupe.ca)

MINERS ONCE TOOK A CANARY WITH THEM INTO THE MINES TO WARN AGAINST UNSAFE CONDITIONS.



If the canary collapsed, it was sign to get out of the mine ... and fast.

Today, CUPE members everywhere act as frontline protection for their fellow citizens.

Each year, approximately **1,000 Canadian workers are killed on the job**. Hundreds of thousands are injured. Countless thousands become permanently disabled or die from work-related diseases.

April 28th is a day to pause, reflect and gather our resolve. Let's use it to rededicate ourselves to the **fight for improved health and safety**.

# NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

# April 28



#### Bookmarks and posters available

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