

CUPE BC 2023 CONVENTION ANTI-PRIVATIZATION COMMITTEE REPORT

In this next phase of the pandemic, we remain confident that strong public services are crucial to our collective success against the COVID-19 virus and its impacts on our society and economy. Our BC NDP government continues to invest in public services, as evidenced by our strong economic recovery. Politicians in all levels of government are under immense pressure to impose austerity measures and to stop investing in the common good. A key point of pressure is for the government to reduce and privatize public services, or to roll out new services but through private sector partners who want to profiteer on post-pandemic spending. We must not allow this to happen. Now more than ever, we must advance an agenda that centres strong public services at the core of resilient communities.

We continue to fight attacks on our jobs in all sectors of CUPE, including municipalities, school districts, post-secondary education, social services, healthcare and more. Locals throughout the province continuously challenge employers to bring more work back in-house, and to prevent the contracting out of work that could be done by our members. It is vitally important to continue our fight against privatization and contracting out, as it negatively impacts our members and our work, especially our most vulnerable and marginalized members, who are often engaged in precarious work.

We see a wide variety in the services that are contracted out across the workplaces represented by our Locals; garbage collection, recycling collection, snow removal, custodial work, skilled trades, security, and food/catering services are among the most contracted out. Employers often cite a lack of equipment and resources as a primary reason to contract work out, which is unsurprising considering the trend of public employers drastically underfunding the critical infrastructure and tools needed to maintain our communities. CUPE will continue to fight austerity and privatization at every opportunity.

Publicly Delivered Universal Affordable Child Care

One of the most significant privatization risks in BC is the privatization of childcare on school grounds. The creation of a childcare program in British Columbia is a much-needed new core public service that will ensure a just and equitable recovery from COVID-19. However, it also presents one of the most significant privatization risks in BC as the provincial government determines if they will roll out a truly universal, robust, publicly delivered service, or simply expand the current patchwork of privatized childcare spaces.

For the last three years, CUPE BC has actively campaigned for publicly operated affordable and accessible childcare delivered by integrating the emerging system of early care and learning and our existing public education system. Building on our successful “Seamless Day” campaign, which expanded to 40 districts in the 2022/23 school year, our campaign for publicly delivered before- and after-school care is growing in popularity. Through a cost share with CUPE National that ended on December 31, 2022, CUPE BC has created a campaign that centres CUPE members, tells our members’ childcare stories, engages the public through traditional and digital media, and seeks to influence decision makers through lobbying at local and provincial levels of government to adopt a publicly delivered system of childcare.

Through all this work, CUPE BC has made significant inroads in the public childcare conversation, and we will be continuing those conversations with an exciting re-invigoration of the campaign in the coming year. Like all our work, our strength is our members. The Committee encourages locals to join the “Public Childcare Now” campaign and members to take action through our [campaign website](#)

Building Community Awareness

CUPE Local 556, a composite local representing municipal workers in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island, continues their campaign and cost share with CUPE National to build public awareness and support for contracting-in services. This campaign builds on the local’s successful actions in 2016 to stop a P3 sewage treatment facility and keep services public. Goals of the campaign include raising community awareness of improvements to services through public delivery which include accountability, increased quality, and safety. Through a variety of methods, the campaign will increase public awareness about the value of high-quality public services and the public employees providing them.

Raising the Floor Through Teamwork

CUPE Local 3338 continues their campaign to bring custodial work back in-house at Simon Fraser University. In July 2022, the SFU President announced that the University would be pursuing Living Wage certification, especially to support contract workers, including custodial workers, represented by CUPE. While this announcement was made and positive media coverage was given to SFU, they have not made any steps toward following through on their commitment to becoming a Living Wage employer. As these workers enter bargaining, a living wage will be one priority, along with improving working conditions and benefits for these members.

Even if a living wage is achieved, the work will continue to bring these members in-house. We understand the importance of bringing contracted-out work, especially custodial and food service work, back in-house. These workers deserve the same working conditions and benefits as other workers on campus.

Bringing Work Back In-House Pilot Projects

CUPE BC and the Anti-Privatization Committee have a pilot project program for Locals to apply for funding and support to help bring work back in-house. The pilot projects pertain to work that has either been contracted out and should be brought back in, or work that has never been in the bargaining unit but should be. CUPE BC will provide funding toward the project if applicant Locals are successful and will provide other types of resources as required, such as research and communications. We strongly encourage Locals to speak to a member of the Anti-Privatization Committee or their CUPE National Representative about this opportunity.

When preparing your Pilot Project Application, please include the following:

1. Sector represented.
2. Help required: staff, research resources, leaflets, ads, communications, etc.
3. History of work that was contracted out – when and why it was lost.
4. History of work to be brought in-house – why you believe this work can be returned to your bargaining unit.
5. What type of resources your Local is prepared to commit to the project: book off time, funding from your local.

Living Wage Campaign

The fight for a living wage in British Columbia is led by the “Living Wage for Families Campaign”. The Living Wage for Families Campaign is supported by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC in developing annual living wage rates for communities across British Columbia. The group advocates for both private and public employers, including municipalities and school boards, to pay all their employees, and often contractors, a living wage. There is also a certification process for employers to be certified living wage employers. CUPE participates in the Living Wage Advisory Committee, along with representatives from other unions, allies, and coalition partners.

The living wage for a region is based on a two-parent family with two children, with both parents working full-time. Arriving at the determination of a living wage, the campaign group collates the costs incurred by a family of four: food, clothing, rental housing, childcare, transportation, and small savings to cover illnesses or emergencies. The [Living Wage for Families BC](#) website provides a breakdown of living expenses for a family of four and the living wage calculation. It should be noted that even when an employer adopts the living wage, the prevalence of casual, part-time, and other precarious work means that not every employee will be lifted out of poverty.

As part of the leadup to the 2022 municipal elections, candidates seeking labour endorsement have been asked if they support a living wage. This information helps labour councils and individual labour organizations make better-informed decisions about who to support.

In addition to supporting the living wage campaign’s goal to lift all working people out of poverty, the committee encourages CUPE locals to advocate that their employers become living wage employers and that the living wage criteria be applied to the employer’s contractors. A requirement that ensures that organizations in contracts with public sector bodies pay a living wage removes the economic incentive to contract work out, and will have a positive impact on our ability to protect existing work and to bring additional work in-house.

Anti-Privatization Education Module

We encourage Locals to consider requesting and participating in the new pilot “Stop Contracting Out” module as part of the “Stop Contracting Out” Toolkit. The main topics covered in this workshop are: how to find and use the “Stop Contracting Out” Toolkit, what is contracting in, why contract in and how it works, and what it takes to get it done, including a plan to bring services in-house.

Bargaining Language

Throughout the bargaining process, Locals can plan to include language to bring work back in-house and to prevent contracting out. We encourage Locals to include information and questions about privatization in your bargaining surveys, and to make use of the many resources on anti-privatization that are available through CUPE including the guide [“Protecting our work from privatization: How to fight contracting out at the bargaining table”](#).

Conclusions

Privatization remains an issue that can sometimes feel removed from the day-to-day operations of a Local. It is very important that we continue to learn and educate ourselves as much as possible about this complex problem that affects communities across the province. Contracting out is indeed an existential issue for the union movement; it is critical that we continue to fight for our members and the high-quality services they provide. If this subject seems daunting, we encourage you to speak to members in our Committee and to seek out resources from CUPE and other progressive organizations. It is vital that we are vigilant in our efforts to stop privatization before it starts, as employers seek out austerity cost savings post-pandemic.

We encourage you to support the resolution brought forward by our Committee, which include the opposition of Canada Health Transfer funds being used to fund privatized medical services, and the creation of a master database to track existing contracts that should be our work.

ANTI-PRIVATIZATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Education & Resources

Canadian Union of Public Employees

BC Families Need Affordable, Public Childcare for School-aged Kids

<https://www.publicchildcarenow.ca>

Living Wage for Families BC

What Is a Living Wage? Living Wage for Families Campaign

https://www.livingwageforfamilies.ca/what_is_living_wage

CUPE Education

LET - Resisting privatization during a pandemic (OLS)

<https://cupe.ca/mrm-union-education/workshop/157>

Canadian Union of Public Employees

Protecting our work from privatization: How to fight contracting out at the bargaining table

<https://cupe.ca/protecting-our-work-privatization-how-fight-contracting-out-bargaining-table>

Canadian Union of Public Employees

Bringing Our Work Back Home: A Guide to Standing Up for Public Services

[https://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/bringing_our_work_back_home_a_guide_to_standing_u
p_for_public_services.pdf](https://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/bringing_our_work_back_home_a_guide_to_standing_up_for_public_services.pdf)

Canadian Union of Public Employees

Keep Our Pensions Out of Privatization: A guide for CUPE members, trustees and other pension representatives

<https://cupe.ca/new-toolkit-helps-members-keep-pensions-out-privatization>

Canadian Union of Public Employees

Checklist: Protecting public services during the pandemic and beyond

<https://cupe.ca/checklist-protecting-public-services-during-pandemic-and-beyond>

Thank you to Tuesday Andrich, Steven Beasley, and Maja Bohinc for their contributions to this committee.

Respectfully submitted:

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