



## **CUPE BC 2023 CONVENTION COLLEGES COMMITTEE REPORT**

The CUPE BC Colleges Committee is composed of Local Presidents or designates from BC colleges, institutes, and special-purpose universities, who are appointed by the CUPE BC Executive Board. CUPE members are the foundation of our institutions and provide invaluable operational support and services. The next few years will see some committee members retire from their institutions or step down as Presidents. This committee has done a lot of great work together over the years and will miss each other's friendship and solidarity.

Our challenges as a sectoral committee are ongoing, and resolutions are difficult to attain in the short-term. However, we continue to advocate for affordable and accessible public post-secondary education for current and future generations of workers and students. The Committee extends this solidarity and friendship to all CUPE BC Colleges and hopes that the colleges will come onboard for the next term. We also say thank you to our members who supported our work.

### **Boards of Governance (BOG)**

College Governance is legislated through the College and Institute Act. The College Board of Governors consists of appointed and elected board members as well as the President of the institution (ex-officio) and Chair of the Education Council (ex-officio). There are eight people appointed by the Government, plus the following who are elected by the respective organizations: one support staff, one faculty member, and two students. The BOG Chair is elected by the Board but must be one of the eight members appointed by the Government.

The Education Council consists of 2 support staff, 10 faculty members, and 4 students who are elected by their respective organizations. There are also four administrators appointed by the College President. All members of the Education Council have a vote. The Chair of the Education Council is elected by these members, who can also run for the position.

As college employees, CUPE members have the ability to make a difference at their workplace by becoming members of the Colleges Board of Governors. The CUPE BC Colleges Committee is committed to increasing the number of elected members to these Boards. We look forward to utilizing the Board Resource Kit, which will empower locals to actively engage in the board member election/appointment processes for the boards that govern many of our employers and our workplaces.

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The CUPE BC Colleges Committee urges you to inquire through the Board Resourcing Office, which is responsible for candidate appointments to public sector organizations funded by the BC government.

### **Engagement**

Engaging our membership and obtaining community support for CUPE members is an ongoing challenge faced by the post-secondary sector. The Colleges Committee remains committed to fighting for gains in social and economic justice for our members by engaging and motivating our members through communication and education.

### **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

Our institutions have Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committees established to work on identifying inequities and are working to find ways to remove barriers. Our members are active participants in these committees and are committed to effecting change in their workplaces. The CUPE BC Colleges Committee recognizes the importance of, and supports the efforts of, all post-secondary institutions making meaningful changes that go beyond talk and result in effective actions that move us towards achieving inclusive and safe workspaces.

### **Inflation**

The College Sector as a whole continues to be impacted by ongoing inflation. Increases in the cost of food, transportation and housing are undermining the buying power of workers across the globe, and workers in the College Sector are no different. More and more research has identified ongoing corporate profits as the biggest factor contributing to increases in prices for essentials.

### **Long Term Effects of The Pandemic**

As variants continue to emerge, so do concerns from CUPE members in the college sector. The increases in absences continue, as do the strains on staff who must backfill employees who are absent. The workload increases for people who already have heavy workloads is causing increased stress, leading to fatigue and frustration. Also, some members are afraid to come to work or perform duties that they believe to be unsafe due to their personal fear of catching the virus. COVID-19 is still circulating and the chance of catching the virus, and spreading it to vulnerable family members, has not been eliminated. In summary, the pandemic continues to be a concern for the sector and the front-line employees who are the most at risk.

## **Mental Health**

There has been a marked increase in anxiety-related mental health issues. The mandate of all Colleges across BC may be to provide education to students, but these same institutions also have a duty to provide their employees and students with the education and resources needed to support mental health. While BC Colleges may acknowledge their responsibility towards mental health, the reality is that it is increasingly difficult to manage these issues and provide the services needed using past and traditional methods of supporting medical conditions without additional investment in support.

## **Post Secondary Funding**

The BC Government is in the process of reviewing the funding model for BC's Post-Secondary System. In July 2022, CUPE BC submitted a comprehensive proposal outlining our vision for post-secondary funding in British Columbia. A few highlights of the proposal include:

- Providing consistent funding to institutions that acknowledge the real cost and is fair across the system
- Improving portability of education to allow students greater opportunities to study locally while still giving them the ability to achieve their preferred credentials
- Reducing or eliminating contracting out to improve the quality of services and to ensure fair pay and benefits for workers
- Providing funding that ends institutional reliance on international students to balance budgets

## **Truth and Reconciliation**

CUPE members in BC colleges are very conscious of the impact of Truth and Reconciliation. We are working together on our worksites to promote the indigenization of our curriculum and our workplaces, to recognize the history of the residential school system, and to educate future generations.

We recognize the significance of building relationships, supporting Indigenous communities, and ensuring an equitable education.

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### In Closing

Our Committee is committed to educating our membership, employers, and the general public on the values of union principles and the benefits of union membership. We encourage you to join us in our fight for publicly funded post-secondary education. We hope you will support our resolutions regarding a provincial contracting-in strategy for public sector institutions in BC; lobbying the provincial government to increase funding for public community colleges, special purpose and research universities; advocating to CUPE for the creation of region-specific Indigenous education workshops; and lobbying for the expansion of public transit for students and workers in all communities throughout British Columbia.

### Respectfully submitted:

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