



CUPE BC 2022 CONVENTION ANTI-PRIVATIZATION COMMITTEE REPORT

After two years navigating the COVID-19 pandemic we remain confident that strong public services are crucial to our collective success against the virus and its impacts on our society and economy. However, politicians are under immense pressure to impose austerity measures and to stop investing in the common good. A key point of pressure is for 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 continue to 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

The creation of a childcare program in British Columbia is a much-needed new core public service. 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 two years, CUPE BC has actively campaigned for publicly operated affordable accessible childcare delivered by integrating the emerging system of early care and learning and our existing public education system. Building on our successful campaign for the Seamless Day, which will expand to 40 districts in 2022/23, our campaign for publicly delivered before and after school care is growing in popularity. Through a cost share with CUPE National, 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 to adopt a publicly delivered system of childcare. Like all our work, our strength is our members. The committee encourages locals to join the campaign and members to take action through our campaign website: www.publicchildcarenow.ca.

Promoting Equity By Bringing Work In-house

In 2020, Local 23 convinced the City of Burnaby to launch a pilot project to bring six Flaggers (Traffic Control workers) in-house, reducing the need to contract out this work. Flaggers are very often women, whom contractors pay low wages, their working conditions are poor, and the employment is precarious. The pilot project has been a huge success and the City's crews have seen a reduction in work delays because of outside contractors canceling last minute. Just recently, the City decided to keep this work in-house and converted these workers from temporary to permanent positions. Now the Local is encouraging the City to build on the success by bringing more of this work in-house. We encourage all locals to look for these opportunities to bring work in-house, which builds our union while making a life-changing difference to contract workers.

Building Community Awareness

CUPE Local 556, a composite local representing municipal workers in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island, is engaged in a campaign and cost share with CUPE National to build public

awareness and support for contracting-in services. This campaign will build 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 L3338 has launched a campaign to bring custodial work back in-house at Simon Fraser University. The campaign is building momentum and much community support. Local 3338 is partnering with other campus allies (Contract Worker Justice, "CWJ") who have helped shine the light on poor working conditions and wages for some of the lowest paid workers at SFU during the COVID-19 pandemic (custodial staff & staff working in food services). Please take a moment to check out the CWJ web site at: contractworkerjusticesfu.ca

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 your Local is 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 group advocates for both private and public employers, including municipalities and school boards, to pay all their employees, and often contractors, a living wage. 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. www.livingwageforfamilies.ca/what_is_living_wage provides a breakdown of the 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 you, your local or your District Council to consider requesting and participating in “Preventing privatization at work: Protecting public services during the COVID-19 pandemic”, found under the Local Executive Training workshop opportunities. The main topics covered in this workshop are: what is privatization and how to spot the signs; how privatization hurts jobs and communities; increasing risk because of the COVID-19 pandemic; how we can get organized to prevent privatization before it starts; opportunities to influence and next steps.

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.

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 resolutions brought forward by our committee, which include investing in public services to build a more just and equitable post COVID recovery; supporting a publicly funded and publicly operated progressive provincial model of early learning and care and; encouraging the education and action of our locals in the 2022 local government elections.

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Education & Resources

- **Public Childcare Now**
www.cupe.bc.ca/public_childcare_now
- **Living Wage**
www.livingwageforfamilies.ca/what_is_living_wage
- **Preventing privatization at work: Protecting public services during the COVID-19 pandemic**
cupe.ca/mrm-union-education/workshop/157
- **Our best line of defence: Taking on privatization at the bargaining table**
cupe.ca/our-best-line-defence-taking-privatization-bargaining-table
- **Bringing Our Work Back Home A guide to standing up for public services:**
d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/cupebcvotes2014/pages/2040/attachments/original/1493908705/Bringing_Our_Work_Back_Home_A_guide_to_standing_up_for_public_services.pdf
- **Keep Our Pensions Out of Privatization Toolkit**
cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/guide_pension_privatization_en.pdf
- **Protecting Public Services During the Pandemic & Beyond**
cupe.ca/checklist-protecting-public-services-during-pandemic-and-beyond
- **Early Warning Signs of Privatization**
cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/warning_signs_privatization_en.pdf

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