



CUPE BC 2022 CONVENTION OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

The newly appointed CUPE BC Occupational Health & Safety Committee met in October and November 2021 and had one meeting in January 2022. Our last in-person meeting was February 8th, 2020, to discuss issues that impact CUPE workers in BC.

Covid-19 continues to change the landscape for all CUPE members across BC. We have faced many safety obstacles related to this pandemic that have challenged us all to improve safety in the workplace related to communicable diseases that impact our members and all workers in BC.

The committee continues to meet on Zoom, and we have worked diligently to develop a strategy focused on making workplaces safer for members dealing with this pandemic, while providing vital services in our communities in British Columbia. We continued to discuss a variety of issues around improvements to occupational health and safety, focusing on the issues that continue to put our members' safety at risk every day.

The committee's consistent priority has been to find ways to stay on the pulse of new legislation as it comes out, to advocate on behalf of workers in BC, and to continue to be a strong voice when it comes to any new regulation and policy changes that may impact our members.

Another focus for the committee has been to continue to innovate new tools and resources that inform, educate, and raise awareness for all CUPE members, especially when it comes to workplace hazards and workplace assessments, as well as continued education on the right to refuse unsafe work. We know that circulating guidelines and fact sheets is an effective means of informing and educating our members and reducing or eliminating the risks when it comes to the many safety hazards our members face every day in the workplace.

Part of our work leads us to advocating with Worksafe BC and our Provincial Government, and we will be making sure to apply pressure for the continued support of injured workers in BC and changes to the Worksafe Act and legislation that will foster hazard prevention and reduce the number of workers being killed or injured as the result of a workplace incident. We are committed to monitoring and ensuring that there is a continued commitment to improve the working conditions for CUPE BC members and all workers in BC.

For information on the CUPE BC OH&S Committee safety activities and resources, please check the CUPE BC website.

Violence in the workplace

Unfortunately, violence in the workplace is still one of the biggest concerns when it comes to our members. Physical, verbal, psychological, and sexual incidents continue to increase significantly in all sectors across British Columbia and throughout the country.

We are focused on all areas, and sadly, violence in our workplaces is especially prevalent for the K-12 workers, paramedics, lifeguards, library workers, outside municipal workers, senior centers, social services, and transportation workers.

We know it is not limited to just those sectors, and unless we continue to push back, these incidents will continue rising at an alarming rate.

The committee agreed that employers are not doing enough to deal with these potentially violent situations that put all workers in BC at risk. There is a major lack of resources and ineffective policies in place to protect workers' rights to a safe and healthy workplace. There should be no acceptable level of violence for any worker in BC for any reason.

CUPE BC health and safety committee will be making violence in the workplace a priority. We will continue to encourage locals and district councils to order the 'Preventing Violence in the Workplace' kits. These kits are our best defence in providing the tools to our members and to aid

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in strengthening our OH&S committees in all sectors, as well as to help educate our members, with the ultimate goal of eliminating the horrors associated with workplace violence.

To order these kits, please access the CUPE National website or make your request to your National Servicing Representative.

Conferences

The CUPE BC Executive Board approved sending two members from our committee to attend the Pacific Safety Centre: Western Conference on Safety on April 6th and 7th. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, this was once again cancelled this year.

Health and safety conference strategies

The OH&S committee continued to discuss strategies with the Division to hold a conference for health and safety, and thanks to the continued support from the CUPE BC Executive Board, we know that we had previously committed to holding a superconference that would encompass all committees, and are optimistic that coming out of the pandemic may be on the 2023 schedule.

Resolutions to convention

The CUPE BC OH&S Committee have re-submitted several resolutions to convention. In years past, many excellent resolutions were submitted that unfortunately did not reach the floor of convention. The OH&S committee will continue to prioritize and advocate for the following resolutions that address:

- Psychological Health & Safety
- Risk Assessment Regulations
- Workplace Violence
- Near Hit Incidents
- Opposing Mandatory Drug Testing
- Mental Health & Safety Education in Public School Curriculum

Day of Mourning was April 28

We pause on April 28th every year to remember workers killed and those still suffering from work-related injury or illness, and who have seen their lives and livelihoods forever compromised.

Workers in British Columbia in 2021 that were affected by workplace injuries:

- There were 161 deaths because of workplace incidents in 2021
- Complete injury stats for 2021 have not been released. The committee will report as soon as they are released.

These numbers are tragic, and we need to do more and put more safety measures in place in British Columbia in all workplaces to protect workers. An injury to one is an injury to all, and as activists, we shall mourn for the dead and fight like hell for the living.

Conclusion

The OH&S committee would like to thank the CUPE BC Executive Board for their continued support, as well as the support staff at CUPE BC and the BC Regional office. Tom McKenna, our staff representative, has been a valuable resource and support mechanism for our committee. Tom's knowledge and experience is crucial to our function and for that, we are grateful. We have also enjoyed working with CUPE National Communications Representatives as they have provided us with their expertise in all communication-related projects that we have or will be executing.

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Respectfully submitted:

John Gibson, Chair
Henry Lee, Co-Chair
Martha Higgins, Recording Secretary
Aman Cheema
Niki Cooke
Cody Dillabough
Hailey Fielden, Young Worker Shadow Appointee
Corey Froese
Allan Hendricks
Lisa Medynski
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Lindy Pinson, Young Worker Shadow Appointee
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Amanda Thielen
Charlene Turnbull
Kelly-Lynn Ware
Tom McKenna, Staff Advisor
Chika Buston and Maja Bohinc, Administrative Assistants

March 2022

