

# Counterpoint

## **AARON WOZNICA: STREET HEALTH WORKER, CUPE 7797**

**CANNABIS COMING  
TO NB LIQUOR STORES**

**Social impact  
bonds: profit from  
community needs**

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School Board  
Council rises to  
meet challenge**

**Libraries  
fight back in  
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# HE SAID

*“If a group of volunteers can come together and save 100 lives in four months, just think what we could do if our governments stepped up,”*

*Aaron Woznica, p. 3*



## Cannabis NB Workers Will Be CUPE Members

You can add “selling cannabis” to the list of diverse services CUPE members provide. Last fall, the New Brunswick government gave the green light to sell recreational cannabis at its liquor stores.

After lobbying, submissions and consultations, CUPE 963, the union representing New Brunswick Liquor workers will be representing workers at Cannabis NB, a subsidiary of Alcool NB Liquor Corporation (ANBL), a publicly owned crown corporation.

“Up until this winter,

it was not so clear if the workers in the new Crown corporation would be unionized, but our collective agreement contained language that secured recognition of employees in new job classifications. This means these new employees will have good salaries and benefits,” said Jamie Agnew, president of CUPE 963.

Agnew said that many NB Liquor employees could get training to become product advisors at Cannabis NB.

“I am confident that

recreational-use cannabis will be sold in a safe and responsible way, as our members have proven their professionalism in dealing with alcohol, another controlled substance,” he added.

Cannabis excise tax dollars will be divided 75 per cent/25 per cent between the provinces and Ottawa, and municipalities are seeking to get their share from the provinces.

“Provincial governments are anticipating that cannabis sales will put big money into public coffers, but

## Calgary locals face pressure in bargaining

Three CUPE locals representing Calgary municipal employees are facing a tough round of bargaining, with conservative city councillors and the local newspaper calling for wage freezes.

Calgary City Councillor Shane Keating took the unusual step of commenting to the media about bargaining. He said city workers had done well during the economic downturn and called for unions to accept wage freezes.

Councillor Jeremy Farkas went further calling for wage freezes for “several years” to prevent layoffs. Farkas is a former Research Fellow at the Manning Centre, a right-wing organization dedicated to training conservative activists and limiting the role of government.

The Calgary Herald editorial board piled on, saying it was “regrettable” that CUPE wasn’t willing to accept wage freezes.

CUPE 38 President D’Arcy Lanovaz said it wasn’t his practice to negotiate through the media, but he countered the right-wing offensive.

“These people are conveniently forgetting that hiring was frozen and workloads were increased during the downturn,” Lanovaz said. “In fact, for years, public employees have earned wages below many private sector employees. When our members are attacked, we respond, and we fight for a healthier community for all.”

honestly, it won’t be a cure-all for government revenues,” Agnew said. “Canada’s finance minister estimates the excise tax will bring in approximately 1 billion per year in New Brunswick alone by 2021.

But, according to Canadians for Tax Fairness, going after the big tax cheats and tax havens could easily haul in 10 to 15 times what cannabis will.”

■ **Simon Ouellette**

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# Failure to restore door-to-door mail delivery a letdown for all

Throughout the federal election in 2015, Justin Trudeau promised to restore door-to-door mail delivery for all Canadians. Two years later, with an announcement from Public Services Minister Carla Qualtrough, this promise has been tossed into the growing heap of broken Liberal promises. Many people, particularly the elderly and the disabled have been let down.

The government has committed to ending the process of converting home delivery to community mailboxes, but the 840,000 families who lost home mail delivery will not be getting it back.

Still, thousands of activists and postal workers who mobilized around this issue do have something to celebrate. Four million households know their at-home delivery is safe for now.

CUPE and other unions are now encouraging Minister Qualtrough to explore public sector solutions to improve the services Canada Post offers to Canadians. These solutions include postal banking, a revenue-generator in countries such as New Zealand, France and Britain. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers is a strong advocate for postal banking.

In early February, NDP Canada Post Critic Irene Mathyssen put forward motion M-166, calling on the Liberals to study and move a federal postal banking system forward. As big banks continue to rake in exorbitant profits and abandon communities across the country, postal banking has a void to fill.

Canada Post senior management is in the midst of a large-scale turnover. The search for a new CEO is underway and the successful candidate will be given a mandate to establish better labour relations. There is an opening to improve Canada's postal services.

Let's hope this government can stick to their promises, not just break them.

■ Charlie Brenchley



## PROFILE AARON WOZNICA

### Street Health worker, CUPE 7797

*Hundreds of people were dying from the opioid crisis in Toronto. Street*

*health worker and a member of CUPE 7797, Aaron Woznica knew those deaths could be prevented.*



That's what prompted Aaron, a trained social worker, to join with a group of volunteers in April 2017 to set up and run an overdose prevention site in Moss Park, in Toronto's downtown east side.

"The Liberal government wasn't responding to the

crisis, so we had to," he says. "As a volunteer at the site, I can help in ways I can't at work."

Volunteers like Aaron were eventually named "Torontonians of the Year" for their work by CBC Radio One's Metro Morning show. They earned that title by setting up tents and providing a safe place for drug users to get clean needles, warm clothing, snacks and naloxone (with someone trained to administer it if needed).

In the site's first 100 days, the volunteers witnessed 2,611 injections and stopped or reversed

106 drug poisonings or overdoses.

The fall was an equally busy time at the site. But as winter approached, the government was still failing to adequately address the crisis. Aaron and the other volunteers began to worry about what would happen to the people they were serving once the temperature dropped.

In the absence of government help, CUPE Ontario provided a large heated trailer for the group to use. Members of CUPE 1000, the Power Workers, came in and hooked up the power.

"I have never been so proud to be a CUPE member as I was the day the trailer showed up," Aaron says. "For this group of

people, the winter can be deadly. All of a sudden we knew we could continue to help."

But the crisis has still not been resolved, he says.

"If a group of volunteers can come together and save 100 lives in four months, just think what we could do if our governments stepped up," says Aaron. "The opioid crisis isn't just happening in Toronto's downtown east side. It's happening in communities all across this province and all across this country."

As of the time of publication the Ontario Liberal government has yet to act and the volunteer-run overdose prevention site is still in full operation.

■ Sarah Jordison

## NATIONAL PRESIDENT MARK HANCOCK

### Reuniting our house of labour

In January, our labour movement was dealt a serious blow when the country's largest private sector union, Unifor, announced it was leaving the Canadian Labour Congress.

I was disappointed in Unifor's decision. Their departure has already weakened our labour movement and has damaged union solidarity across Canada.

I was disappointed, too, because of the consequences of this decision taken by Unifor's executive. The CLC constitution is clear: in disaffiliating from the CLC, Unifor members have lost their rights to participate in the CLC, its federations of labour, and its labour councils. And for our local labour councils that means losing the energy, talent and volunteer hours of many talented Unifor activists.

But mostly I am angered by the raids launched by Unifor in Toronto, where they campaigned to take hotel

workers in Toronto from another union, Unite HERE. Our labour movement will never grow if we spend our precious resources fighting amongst unions for workers who are already organized, instead of organizing the hundreds of thousands of workers who do not already have the benefit of a union.

CUPE has been very clear: while Unifor is raiding our sisters and brothers in other unions, there is no place for them in our house of labour.

The absence of Unifor has created a vacuum on the ground – but it also creates an opportunity for CUPE members to step up. As Canada's largest union, now is not the time to pull back. The onus is on all of us, to show up in bigger numbers and in more ways than ever before.

That is why I am asking you to join and participate in your local labour councils, and to affiliate with your provincial federations of labour.

Together, we must do everything we can to strengthen our movement. The labour movement is at our best, and our most powerful, when we stand united.

Working to rebuild that unity and restore union solidarity within Canada's labour movement remains my number one priority.

MARK HANCOCK ONLINE [twitter.com/CUPENatPres](https://twitter.com/CUPENatPres)





# Profiting from community needs: Social services and the threat of social impact bonds

Social services are invaluable to the health and well-being of our communities.

Governments provide funding directly to social services agencies to help people in the community. Agencies do that in many ways, including improved literacy rates, better health outcomes, and fewer people in prison.

Social service providers often have deep roots in the community. Agencies are staffed by experienced and dedicated workers, and can take a long-term approach to addressing systemic issues like poverty, colonialism, and racism.

This public model is efficient. It ensures services

meet changing community needs, and are accountable and responsive. All public dollars go to service delivery.

Unfortunately, governments often decide to underfund social services. This can open the door to privatization. Social impact bonds (SIBs) are a new form of privatization that allow private investors to profit from social services.

In a SIB, private investors provide up-front money for social programs, but expect to make a profit. The investor could be a bank, insurance company, foundation or even a group of for-profit

corporations.

The government often hires a private consultant to broker a deal between private investors, government and social service providers. These consultants

get paid with money that could otherwise be going directly to social services. The consultant and/or government chooses a non-profit that is most likely to meet short-term targets, rather than longer-term community needs. The targets are negotiated by the consultant, for-profit corporation and government.

Meeting the targets means the private investors make a profit. After all this, the service is

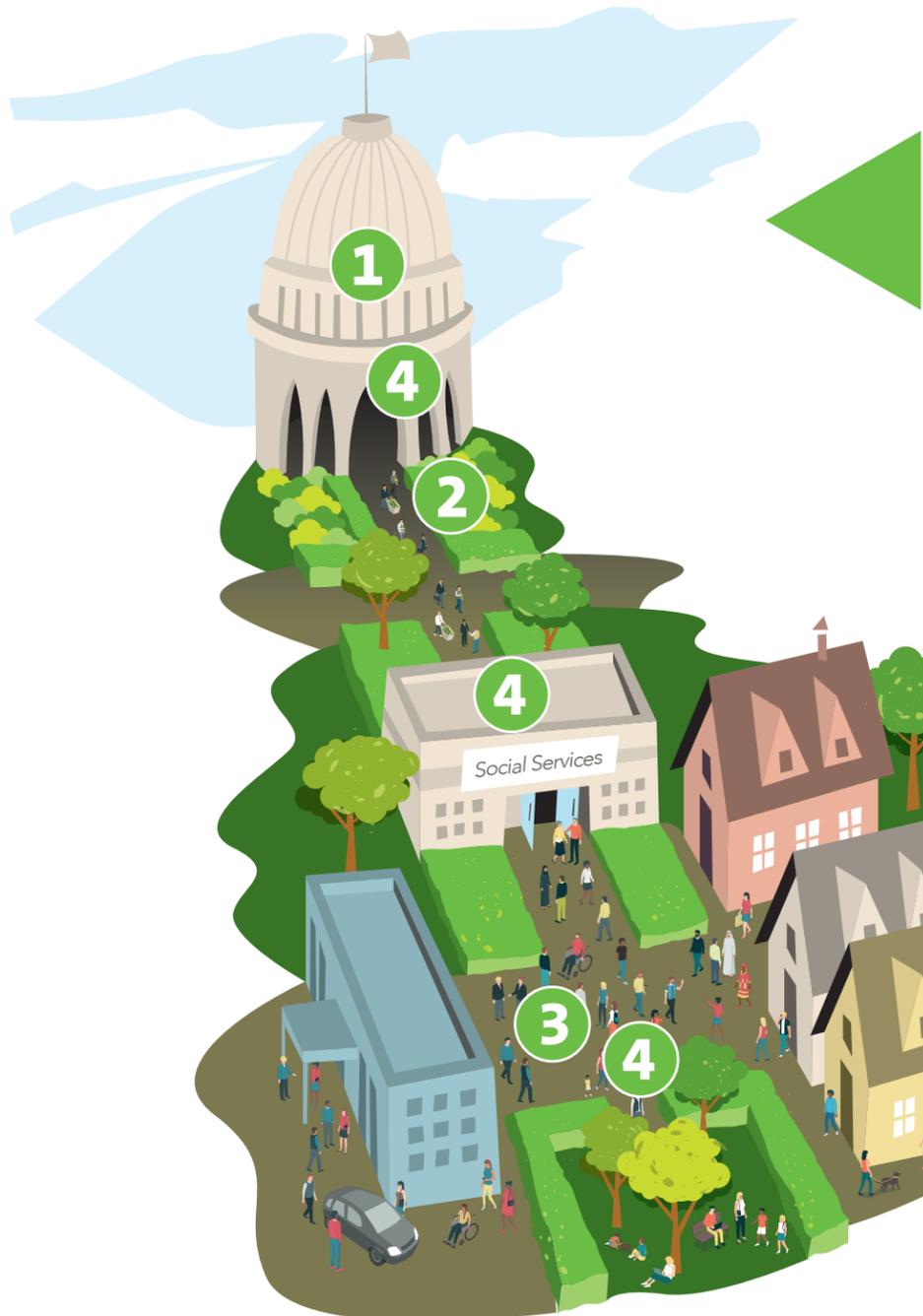
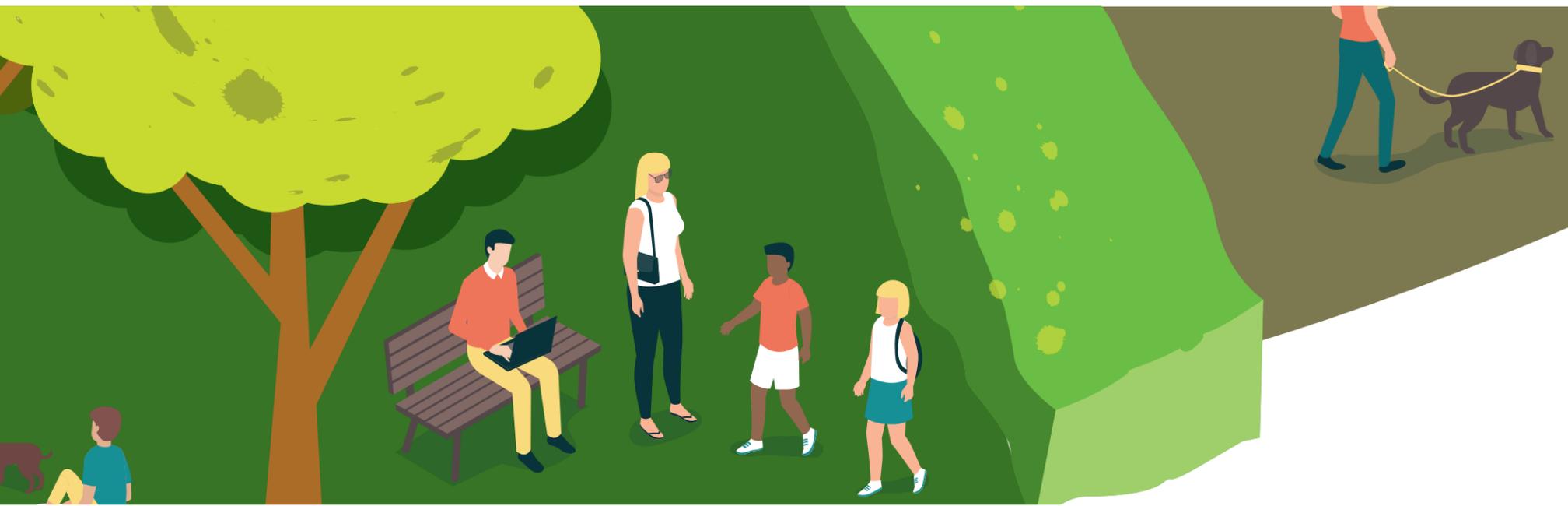


provided. The non-profit eventually reports back to the consultant or a hired evaluator to measure its success. Success is determined based on targets that dictate how much investors will profit. If specific targets are met, the government pays back the investor – with a profit. The private consultants also get paid.

This is wrong. Public money that should go directly to providing social services is diverted instead to private profit.

**There's no room for profit in our community social services.**





## Services for people: how social services work today

1. The government sees people needing support.
2. The government funds a non-profit service agency that can help.
3. The non-profit supports people in the community.
4. The non-profit reports to the community and the government.

## Services for profit: how social impact bonds work

1. A for-profit corporation looks for investment opportunities.  
The government sees people needing support.
2. The government hires a consultant, and may also hire an evaluator.  
The government, consultants and corporation decide who they will help.
3. A non-profit service agency is chosen.
4. The corporation provides the agency funding, but expects a profit.
5. The government, consultant and corporation set targets for the agency to meet. The targets influence which community members get support, and how it is provided.
6. The non-profit agency supports people in the community.
7. The non-profit agency reports to the consultant, or an evaluator.
8. If targets are met government pays the corporation back its investment plus a profit.



# CUPE 561 members ratify pension plan transfer

CUPE members in BC have scored a major pension victory.

Support staff in Coquitlam schools, members of CUPE 561, ratified an agreement to transfer active employees in the SD43 Non-Teaching Pension Plan to the BC Municipal Pension Plan. Ninety-seven per cent of members voted in favour.

Benefits of the transfer agreement include a four per cent wage increase to cover the pension contribution difference between the two plans; full recog-

nition in the municipal pension plan of all past service in the non-teaching pension plan; and a “no worse off” guarantee for members who retire within five years of transferring to the municipal plan.

Prior to negotiations in December, CUPE 561 members rallied in support of post-retirement health benefits. By joining the municipal pension plan, CUPE members will have access to post-retirement health benefits.

This is the first time that the BC Municipal Pension

Plan has worked towards a bulk transfer of employees. Advantages of switching to the plan include lower administration costs and a plan that is not subject to the same solvency requirements of single employer plans.

The BC Municipal Pension Plan represents more than 900 employers with 320,000 members from school districts, cities, districts, towns, villages and regional districts, health and colleges.

■ Janet Szliske



## New videos highlight local work – and celebrate a milestone

Every day the 4,300 members of CUPE 5167 provide countless vital services that make Hamilton a great place to work and live.

In May of this year, they will be celebrating 100 years of bringing quality public services to the people of Hamilton. To mark the occasion, CUPE 5167 decided to showcase local members and the work that they do.

Using drones and moving steady-cam shots, the production team got right into the action with city workers from different departments to show the work that they do.

So, when Damian from the Forestry Department is up in a tree trimming hazardous branches, the camera is right there with him. We follow Ida from Good Shepherd Women’s Services, seeing the impact that she makes in providing critical support to Hamilton’s women in need.

“Our members are extremely proud of the work they do and the contributions they have made to the City of Hamilton for the past 100 years,” said CUPE 5167 President Sandra Walker. “We are thrilled to see our work captured with such energy and emotion in the videos.”

In total, 18 municipal workers from CUPE 5167 are profiled in this video series. There is also a general video, showing the different workers of CUPE 5167 in action, along with a shorter 60 second version of the video that played in a Hamilton movie theatre prior to Star Wars: The Last Jedi!

**View the videos at [cupe5167.org](http://cupe5167.org)**

■ Matt Stella

# Will Quebec weaken the rules for awarding contracts by municipalities?

Quebec’s moves to weaken procurement rules is on CUPE’s radar.

In mid-January, a CUPE delegation attended Quebec’s National Assembly for consultations on Bill 155, which contains various provisions concerning municipal affairs. The CUPE representatives wanted to shed light on key concerns related to the awarding of contracts.

The government wants to weaken rules regarding contracts between \$25,000 and \$100,000, allowing for these contracts to be awarded without a tender process for all Quebec’s 1,110 towns and municipalities, thereby opening the door to less oversight.

“The biggest cause for concern with these lax rules is that towns and municipalities across Quebec could end up opting for contracts by mutual agreement in the majority of cases rather than through a tender process. It’s not the outcome we expect following years of scandals and all the talk about integrity, transparency, and proper management of public funds,” said Denis Bolduc, president of CUPE QC.

CUPE is also disappointed that Bill 155 fails to force or even encourage municipalities to bolster their internal expertise when it’s understood to be the best protection against corruption and collusion.

■ Sébastien Goulet



# CUPE welcomes RCMP telecom operators and intercept monitor analysts

RCMP telecom operators and intercept monitor analysts have voted to join CUPE, according to the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board (FSLREB). The new bargaining unit includes close to 1,300 members.

“Our 650,000 members across the country warmly welcome the RCMP telecom operators and intercept monitor analysts into the CUPE family. Congratulations! You worked very hard to create your own union, and CUPE will proudly continue to defend your interests,” said CUPE’s

National President Mark Hancock. “As soon as your local is set up and the bargaining preparations completed, we will go to the table, and fight to improve your working conditions with the full strength of CUPE behind you.

“As CUPE members, you

will have access to all the resources necessary to meet your employer on equal terms,” added CUPE’s National Secretary Treasurer Charles Fleury. “Working together with you, we will succeed in negotiating the fair deal you deserve.”

In January 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada

ruled that legislation barring regular and civilian RCMP members from forming a union was unconstitutional, infringing on their right to freedom of association. CUPE’s successful organizing drive started in the fall of 2016.

■ Philippe Gagnon

# Rising to the challenge: the new Ontario School Board Council of Unions

## MAKING HISTORY MAKING A DIFFERENCE

This March, CUPE's education workers in Ontario will hold the inaugural convention of their official new bargaining structure, the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU).

When the council bargains centrally in 2019, it will represent 55,000 members employed by school boards in the province – CUPE's largest bargaining table.

The idea of a council of unions for CUPE education

workers was first put forward in 2008 by the Ontario School Board Coordinating Committee (OSBCC), which has led over a hundred CUPE school board bargaining unit in successive rounds of coordinated bargaining. Over the years, the strategy produced major gains for education workers, including sick leave for thousands of CUPE members who didn't have it before (2012); funding to increase the hours of work

for educational assistants (2008); and money for additional staffing and job security language (2015).

The OSBCC also played a vital role in CUPE's successful Charter challenge to Ontario's now-repealed Bill 115. In 2017, the challenge won a remedy of \$56.7 million for more than 60,000 current and former CUPE education workers.

At the same time, legislative developments were

transforming the bargaining landscape. Last year, the provincial government passed the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Amendment Act 2017*, which made central bargaining mandatory for unions representing education workers in Ontario.

The new legislation obliged CUPE education workers to adopt a new structure that would serve as a recognized bargaining agent in central bargaining.

In response, the OSBCC formed a restructuring committee which consulted members, designed a democratic structure, and drafted a new budget and bylaws. In November 2017, members adopted the bylaws and endorsed the formation of a council of unions.

The OSBCU is now chartered as a bargaining council under the CUPE National Constitution. The new structure will lead central bargaining in 2019 – in what could be a very different political environment – and carry out provincially organized campaigns to focus atten-

tion on the issues that affect students, schools, communities, and CUPE members working for school boards.

The transition hasn't been without its critics. Some locals worry about a loss of local autonomy, but that democratic value won't change under the new council. Others express concerns about increased affiliation costs. But leaders point out that the OSBCU will offer value for money to its affiliated locals, providing many benefits, including arbitration of central issues, a central process for sharing grievance data, and the opportunity for local representation at the central bargaining table.

The OSBCU looks forward to working on behalf of CUPE education workers from all locals, large and small. Together, we will continue to build the strong legacy of bargaining agreements that recognize and promote the vital role that CUPE members play in Ontario schools.

■ Mary Unan

### NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER CHARLES FLEURY

## New budget provides more staff support for our members

Our members face attacks on all fronts as they work hard delivering services to the public. To support them and the services they provide, CUPE invests the majority of its resources in staffing.

The battle against privatization and other measures that undermine the work of members across the country is significant. Having well-trained staff available to help our locals with campaigns and help uphold their collective agreements, is money well spent.

Last year, 40 staff retired across the country, and staff turnover will only increase significantly in the next few years. Not only do we need to fill these positions, but we see that more staff are needed.

Fortunately, CUPE's 2018 budget is a good news budget. Because we managed our finances carefully,

just over 2.8 million dollars were allocated to create 18 new staff positions. In 2017, only one new position was created.

We will continue to support our new staff with increased resources for staff training and mentoring, but our staffing challenge is not just about money. CUPE locals are changing. In many regions, smaller locals are merging into big provincial locals, and we have more central and provincial bargaining tables. As CUPE continues to grow, newly-organized members need more assistance. We need more coordination, more support for legal and political fights and more strategic planning.

In light of these changes, we have set up a taskforce on staffing to review how we can better support our members. The taskforce will review how our resources are allocated across the country and look at where we need more resources. It will also look at our current approaches to servicing. Input will be received from small and large locals, and regions.

The taskforce will report back to the June National Executive Board in time for recommendations for the budget consultations next fall. And you can be assured that throughout the whole process, the taskforce will be guided by the interests of our 650,000 members.

CHARLES FLEURY ONLINE  [twitter.com/CUPENatSec](https://twitter.com/CUPENatSec)



# Let's end waste and use glass

A mere 14 per cent of the glass that people place in recycling bins or bags is actually recycled. Most of it ends up at the dump. To remedy this, Quebec CUPE members have launched a campaign called *Glass: an end to waste / I sign for deposits*.

CUPE 3535, which represents Quebec liquor board (SAQ) workers, together with the United Steelworkers, representing workers at the Owens-Illinois glassworks, and in conjunction with the CSN, has launched a campaign to return bottles of wine and spirits.

The campaign was launched in early December with activists stationed at the entrance of about 15 SAQ branches to invite customers to “sign for deposits”. A short video, available on the CUPE Quebec website, was produced to explain the problem.

*The Glass: an end to waste*

campaign proposes introducing a 25-cent deposit on every bottle sold by the SAQ. “The government corporation should be an exemplary corporate citizen. It needs to take responsibility,” said CUPE Quebec President Denis Bolduc.

“We are one of the only provinces in the country that does not have returnable wine and spirit bottles and we have seen where that has led, with pathetically low recycling and recovery rates. Deposits are good for the environment, good for the Quebec economy and good for labour.”

Deposits on bottles of wine and spirits would enable us to collect glass separately and to treat it more easily so that it can be recycled into new glass. Currently, the Quebec plant that manufactures glass containers must import crushed glass from abroad at considerable expense.

■ Lisa Djevahirdjian



## Labour campaign cleans house at Pacific Blue Cross

A CUPE-led, labour movement campaign to replace seven members of the Pacific Blue Cross (PBC) board of directors ended with all seven of the labour-endorsed candidates elected in December.

This victory on the board came on the heels of another victory, after a summer-long lockout of CUPE 1816 members ended with a new collective agreement that protects the retiree benefits the employer had been targeting.

“This process was all about ensuring that the next leadership group at PBC

is progressive,” said CUPE 1816 President Beth Miller, noting that the incumbent board’s inaction on the company’s concessionary bargaining proposals and its failure to prevent the lockout were clear signals that change was needed at the non-profit, extended health benefits provider.

The seven winning candidates from the progressive slate all had impressive backgrounds in community involvement, labour activism or knowledge of health and pension benefits: MoveUp Vice President Alicia Gallo, BC



## Libraries fight back in Saskatchewan

The year 2017 was momentous for library workers and their communities in Saskatchewan.

The March 2017 provincial budget imposed sweeping cuts to the public sector, including a \$4.8 million cut to library funding, and threatened to eliminate rural library service and gut urban library service.

In response, CUPE library workers worked with grassroots community groups and library patrons to mount one of the largest grassroots mobilizations in the province’s history.

More than 7,000 people in 70 communities participated in “Drop Everything and Read” actions outside MLA constituency offices and other venues across the province. The unprecedented public support for libraries forced an about-face from Brad Wall’s Saskatchewan Party government, who admitted they were surprised by the public outcry, and reversed the cuts and fully restored library funding.

“I loved the protests across the province as it gave a visual representation of the importance of libraries in people’s communities,” said CUPE 2669 President Pam Ryder, representing 290 Saskatoon Public Library workers.

Unfortunately, this wasn’t the end of the story. In May, 23 CUPE 2669 members were laid off, with only half of them able to bump into alternate positions, often at lower pay and only part time. A 27-year member, Yvonne Siermacheski, chair of the Public Relations committee for the local, lost her full-time position as a film specialist to be offered a lower-paying part-time position that reduced her monthly income by more than half.

Siermacheski says that the restructuring to a “community-led service model” is a false bill of goods. Vital departments and community outreach services are being eliminated without consultation or input. As part of the process, librarians were laid off and forced to reapply for new positions, with some enduring five or six job interviews despite years of service, and others forced to resign.

Entire departments in Saskatoon are slated for elimination in 2018, including Children’s Services, Outreach Services, Local History, Adult and Information Services, Fine Arts, and more. These programs have proved especially important to new Canadians, low-income residents, the disabled, local authors, genealogists, researchers, and children and families.

“We are missing many programs that we used to offer that were cornerstones for the community. These programs draw in patrons like new mothers and their babies and make life long library users,” says Ryder.

“Both Regina and Saskatoon Public Libraries are top-heavy organizations,” says CUPE 1594 Vice-President Alejandra Cabera in Regina. “Regina Public Library now has a 1:8 ratio of managers to staff. We’ve also seen an increase in precarious work. Regina Public Library is at a 50/50 ratio in full-time and part-time staff and has nearly two dozen term positions.”

With the support of CUPE National, Saskatchewan library workers continue to campaign – holding rallies, producing online videos, and lobbying – for a robust public library system that recognizes the value of both library workers and the communities they serve.

■ Andrew Loewen

Federation of Labour Secretary-Treasurer Aaron Ekman, Royal Columbia Hospital emergency room physician Dr. Sandra Jenneson, St. Paul’s Hospital general internal medicine specialist Dr. Stéphane Voyer, Hospital Employees’ Union pensions and Benefits Director Brendan Dick,

UNIFOR Local 2200 President Joe Elworthy, and past BC Teachers’ Federation President Jim Iker.

The labour backed slate issued a campaign platform aimed at returning PBC to its roots as a progressive benefits provider that respects both workers and plan holders.

CUPE staff and members worked with BC Federation of Labour affiliates to promote the progressive slate and get PBC plan holders out to the AGM to place their votes. More than 700 PBC members, all unionized public sector workers, showed up to vote.

■ Daniel Gawthrop