

BARGAINING TRENDS **LIVING WAGE**

How collective bargaining and living wage campaigns can lift workers out of poverty

Developing bargaining strategies that raise the wage floor will have an impact on thousands of CUPE members.

Raising the wage floor is all about improving income for low-paid workers. Minimum wage rates across the country are still below the poverty line and too many workers struggle to make ends meet.

Reviewing the wage information in our Collective Agreement Information System (CAIS) produces interesting results. CUPE members work in 84,387 different job types. Of those, 873 job types (one per cent) have pay rates less than \$12 per hour. 2,844 (3.37 per cent) of job types fall below \$15 per hour. 11,249 (13.33 per cent) of job types fall below \$19 per hour, the target rate established in the Strategic Directions document adopted at CUPE's 2015 National Convention.

A closer look at these numbers shows that CUPE members with jobs in our Recreation, Culture & Entertainment

and our Social Services sectors are more likely to be in low-wage jobs. Adjacent tables show breakdowns of the percentage of jobs by sector or region that fall below the three key thresholds. A reminder: these are not percentages of members in low-wage jobs, but rather, a percentage of job types that are low wage.

CUPE participates in a Living Wage movement that is building momentum across the country. These campaigns set goals to improve minimum wage standards, and close the gap between

a minimum wage and the poverty line.

We also work to achieve our Strategic Directions objective by negotiating the wage increases necessary to move these job types above the \$19 per hour mark. Bargaining strategies that seek to not only stay above the floor can help support the goals of living wage advocates, which in turn helps other workers.

Here are a couple ways that collective agreement language can accomplish this goal:

Minimum wage plus

This language sets the wage rate above the floor and ensures the rate moves if the floor moves. It's done by setting the wage rate for specific jobs in the wage grid at minimum wage plus a dollar figure or a percentage.

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Percentage of job types by hourly rate and region

| Province | Below \$12 per hour | Below \$15 per hour | Below \$19 per hour |
|----------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| BC | 0.58% | 2.12% | 10.50% |
| AB | 0.32% | 1.47% | 6.44% |
| SK | 0.44% | 3.08% | 12.46% |
| MB | 1.04% | 4.72% | 26.50% |
| ON | 1.48% | 3.63% | 9.03% |
| QC | 2.43% | 9.04% | 25.72% |
| NB | 0.53% | 2.07% | 18.98% |
| NS | 1.09% | 4.36% | 34.08% |
| PE | 0.00% | 0.50% | 13.19% |
| NL | 0.05% | 0.95% | 11.95% |

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Percentage of job types by hourly rate and sector

| Sector | Below \$12 per hour | Below \$15 per hour | Below \$19 per hour |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Communication | 0.00% | 0.62% | 10.17% |
| Education | 0.43% | 1.32% | 8.43% |
| Emergency and Security Services | 0.24% | 6.36% | 16.87% |
| Energy | 3.84% | 4.47% | 11.51% |
| Health | 0.26% | 1.55% | 16.64% |
| Municipal Services | 1.49% | 3.44% | 8.63% |
| Post-Secondary Education | 0.93% | 7.07% | 19.18% |
| Recreation, Culture, Entertainment | 3.31% | 12.40% | 32.23% |
| Social Services | 1.39% | 5.41% | 27.75% |
| Transportation | 0.32% | 1.27% | 5.38% |
| Miscellaneous | 0.31% | 5.60% | 18.14% |

In our data, two Sector Councils, Child Care and Library, are identified as industries under a sector. Child care is included under Social Services and Library is included under Municipal Services.

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Minimum wage increase triggers

This language moves wages for all jobs covered under the collective agreement when there is a change in the minimum wage rate. This language would specify that wage rates in all classifications increase by a certain percentage of the increase in minimum wage, and would occur within a set time period of any announced increase from the province.

Talk to your servicing representative about specific language best suited to your local.

Visit livingwagecanada.ca for more details on local campaigns.

■ **Brian Edgecombe**

PASSENGER SAFETY 1:40

Transport Canada neglected its air passenger safety mandate: Federal Court

In its rush to allow Canadian airlines to operate with one flight attendant to 50 passenger seats, a federal judge said Transport Canada neglected its air passenger safety mandate by approving dangerous changes to Sunwing's emergency evacuation procedures.

CUPE asked the Federal Court for a judicial review of Transport Canada's decision in December 2013. In February, a judge concluded that Transport Canada made the change without fully assessing the potential risk, and struck down the amendment. The Court said:

“The failure to conduct the required ‘comprehensive review’ casts doubt on the integrity of the ultimate decision and has the potential to undermine confidence in the application of Transport Canada’s air passenger safety mandate. Specifically, this failure could jeopardize passenger and crew safety in an emergency situation.”

In order to operate with the 1:50 ratio, instead of the proven 1:40 ratio, Sunwing had to demonstrate that even with a reduced number of flight attendants on board, they could evacuate a plane in

15 seconds in the event of an emergency. After three failed tests a Transport Canada inspector allowed the company to skip an important standard safety measure, and a fourth test was successful.

Sunwing was ordered to reintroduce the original evacuation procedure.

The CUPE Airline Division is also challenging the 1:50 regulation on the political front. Prior to the last federal election, the airline Political Action



Tabletalk is published four times a year to provide CUPE bargaining committees and servicing representatives useful information for preparing and negotiating bargaining demands.

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Please email Margot Young at research@cupe.ca with corrections, questions, suggestions, or contributions.



CUPE / Canadian Union
of Public Employees

Tips for negotiating wage increases

Determining members' wages is a key element of collective bargaining. Here's some advice to help CUPE locals formulate their wage demands.

Cost-of-living increase

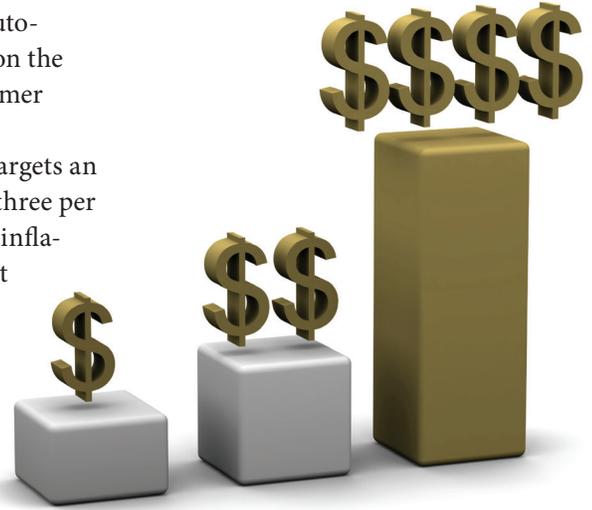
The first factor to consider is the cost-of-living increase. A wage increase that's below inflation leads to a lower standard of living because workers' real wages decrease. Therefore, wage increases should at least keep up with the rate of inflation.

The best protection against inflation

is an "escalator clause" that automatically raises wages based on the annual averages of the Consumer Price Index.

Since the Bank of Canada targets an inflation rate range of one to three per cent, we can normally expect inflation to be around two per cent per year.

CUPE provides its members with a tool to measure inflation and to check if their wages are keeping up with changing prices. Find it at cupe.ca/cpi-calculator



Committee was formed to mobilize flight attendants to vote and to secure commitments from the major parties on passenger safety. Though the Liberal Party did not promise to scrap the regulation, it did commit to working with stakeholders to achieve a high level of passenger safety. The committee will continue to put pressure on the federal government to reinstate the 1:40 ratio.

Finally, CUPE recently joined the International Transportation Workers' Federation (ITF) to observe treaty discussions on deregulation in the global airline industry by member countries including Canada in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Deregulation of the industry would create many problems, including weakening safety standards.

The ITF has called on airline unions around the world to demand that environmental and labour standards be part of any multilateral treaty.

■ **Janet Dassinger and Philippe Gagnon**

Real wage increases

Beyond protections for increases in the cost of living, workers also deserve real wage increases because economic growth tends to be positive over the long term. Workers should therefore benefit from this growth that they help create by obtaining fair, equitable wage increases that are above the rate of inflation. The moment total wage increase exceeds inflation, we call it a real wage increase.

Wage parity

Some CUPE members have low wage levels compared to other, similar groups. For example, the wages of members of a newly unionized group might be lower than other employees in the same sector who've

been unionized longer. Ideally, the local should try to eliminate this gap with its first collective agreement.

Achieving parity requires wage comparisons between similar-sized organizations in the same sector. In the municipal sector, locals should calculate the average wages of employees in similar-sized towns based on their collective agreements.

Once the value of parity is determined, locals must negotiate the time period to achieve it with the employer.

Fortunately, there is a formula to determine the annual percentage required for wages to catch up: divide the final wages by the initial wages, multiply to the power of 1 over the number of years set out for catch-up wages, minus 1, and then multiply by 100:

$$\text{Annual \% increase for parity} = \left(\left(\frac{\text{Final wages}}{\text{Initial wages}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\text{Number of years}}} - 1 \right) \times 100$$

In the next edition of Tabletalk, we will explain how to assess multiple employer wage offers and rate them.

■ **Pierre-Guy Sylvestre**

Victory! Community supports Manitoba midwives, mothers, and babies

Midwives in Winnipeg, represented by CUPE 2348, scored a major victory for maternal health in Manitoba this past March when they reached an agreement after two years of negotiations. A long and tough round of bargaining eventually paid off thanks to a strong strike mandate, an overwhelming rejection of the employer's offer, and the use of conciliation services.

The midwives received pay increases of up to 18 per cent over four years, improvements to vacation leave, and a retirement allowance. They also reached an agreement with the employer to investigate improvements to service delivery for both clients and midwives.

Regulated midwifery was established by the provincial NDP government in June of 2000. The government showed a commitment to growing midwifery care, which included building a world-class birthing centre in Winnipeg. However, issues with midwifery training, recruitment and retention have hindered growth.

Over half of requests for midwifery services have to be turned down due to a lack of midwives. Recently, a senior midwife returned to nursing while others were looking to move to Saskatchewan, where a recently concluded agreement would have them earning up to \$20,000 more per year than in Winnipeg.

Winnipeg midwives feared that a failure to address this issue now could have serious adverse effects on the future of midwifery in Manitoba. The employer's past promise to take a voluntary look at wage adjustments and pay equity had not resulted in



CUPE 2348 marches in support of Winnipeg midwives. Photo: David Jacks.

action. That's why Winnipeg midwives were determined that this round of bargaining was going to address issues of equity and fairness.

The community also understood what was at risk, and were a strong ally in negotiations. When CUPE 2348 held information pickets they made sure to invite community supporters - both directly, and indirectly through social media. As a result every action included clients, past clients, and when it wasn't too cold, children of all ages. Stories in the local papers and TV news programs were filled with images of mothers and babies telling their stories, and showing support for midwives.

The community midwifery activists went beyond joining in on union

events - they self-organized around the issue. They established a Facebook group that grew to over 1600 members where they shared their stories and made action plans. They encouraged each other to contact Members of the Legislative Assembly, and shared the responses they received. They drafted a petition, collected over 2000 signatures, and delivered it to the Minister of Health.

Even after a settlement was reached, the community of supporters remains active. They continue to share stories through social media, and ask politicians to commit to improving midwifery care in Manitoba.

■ **Matt McLean**