



# TORONTO 2025

**CUPE·SCFP**

## Thousands of CUPE members unite to shape the future

Oct 5, 2025

More than 2,000 CUPE members from across Canada came together yesterday to discuss issues facing their sectors, paths forward, and priorities for the coming years. Sector meetings were animated and passionate while outside Convention, child care workers held a rally in support of \$10-a-day child care, a sign of the action in the days to come.



### **Child care workers: The clock is ticking on the \$10-a-day child care agreement!**

At Sunday's Child Care sector caucus meeting, delegates raised serious concerns with the federal government's patchwork approach to child care, citing widespread issues with low wages, long waitlists, and chronic staffing shortages in every province. Members also spoke about a worsening retention crisis, growing scope of their work, and negative impacts on their mental health.

With only months left before the current \$10-a-day child care agreements expire, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario have yet to sign new funding agreements. Without renewals, thousands of families risk losing access to affordable child care.

Following the meeting, delegates held a vibrant action at the entrance to Convention, using a parachute and bubble machine to draw attention to the issue. They handed out flyers urging CUPE members and public passersby to sign online actions targeting key decision makers in **Saskatchewan, Alberta** and **Ontario**.

Caucus meeting attendees also participated in a presentation on ways to better support members with precarious immigration status and discussed organizing strategies in the sector.

### **Public education under pressure: workers push back against cuts and classroom violence**

In February, federal support under Jordan's Principle was drastically reduced for off-reserve school divisions. Jordan's Principle is a legal requirement designed to eliminate service gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. With constant cuts to provincial funding, schools have been relying on Jordan's Principle dollars to fill in gaps. With the federal changes, members discussed how hundreds of educational assistants and other direct student support workers were laid off, in some cases leaving Indigenous students and families without essential supports.

Delegates from coast-to-coast also reported on regressive attacks on public education by right-wing governments. A consistent theme across regions was the link between chronic underfunding and a troubling rise in violence faced by education workers.

Strategies were discussed to bargain anti-violence provisions into collective agreements and to advocate for proper resources to support students with complex learning needs. In the face of these challenges, education sector members spoke about the need to unite behind bargaining committees to protect public education and tackle workplace violence.

### **Short staffing, mental health top discussions among emergency services workers**

Delegates from CUPE's Emergency and Security Services sector gathered to discuss pressing issues with two key themes emerging: a persistent staffing crisis and growing toll on workers' mental health.

Paramedics and dispatchers from across the country reported ongoing short staffing in their regions, resulting in delayed emergency response times. Delegates emphasized that while employers focus on recruitment, they are failing to retain experiencing. They also

pointed to a lack of political will from municipalities to prioritize proper funding for emergency services.

The mental health impacts of this crisis were a major focus with delegates sharing how chronic understaffing is increasing rates of burnout and psychological strain.

Amid these challenges, delegates celebrated recent victories that could point to a path forward across the sector. Some provincial governments have committed to funding new positions and increasing seats at paramedic colleges. In Ontario, locals in Toronto and Peel Region secured historic wage settlements in recent rounds of bargaining. CUPE is now working with other paramedic unions in the province to leverage these gains and improve wages in smaller locals.

### **The Energy sector fighting privatization efforts**

Canada's energy sector is at a crossroads, and CUPE's Energy sector caucus convened to address growing challenges posed by creeping privatization and ongoing government efforts to dismantle the public sector.

Across Canada, investments in wind and solar energy generation, deregulation, and government attacks on the public sector have enabled the rise of private ownership of electricity generation.

CUPE's 45,000 members in the energy sector work in hydroelectric, nuclear, fossil fuel and wind power, across electricity generation, distribution, and transmission for both public and private companies. Despite the differences in the sector, delegates were united in their stance that the future of Canada's public energy utilities relies on CUPE taking a strong, coordinated stand against concessions, privatization, and liberalization efforts.

In the face of an evolving energy landscape, delegates discussed upcoming resolutions on artificial intelligence's impact on electricity consumption, the need to resist hydro privatization in Quebec, and the critical importance of climate justice and Indigenous rights for energy projects.

The David Suzuki Foundation provided a report on lobbying in Ottawa conducted with CUPE and a coalition of partners. These efforts advocated for a public east-west energy

grid to unlock renewable energy potential nationwide. The coalition met with all parties, with the exception of the Conservative Caucus, which declined the invitation.

### **Celebrating library month and a hard-won victory for NB library workers**

October is Canadian Library Month, and CUPE is celebrating the ways library workers provide *Service For Everyone*, supporting our neighbourhoods, students, and academic communities. A toolkit, including customizable designs and resources for locals, can be found at <https://cupe.ca/event/canadian-library-month>.

Beyond the everyday impact of CUPE's 22,000 library workers, the Library sector caucus meeting also commemorated the successful fightback campaign mounted by CUPE 2745 in New Brunswick this year. After three school districts announced in the spring, they were closing school libraries and laying off library workers in response to the province's direction to cut \$43 million from school budgets, CUPE filed legal challenges and members marshalled public support by meeting with community groups.

Despite the concerted government attempt, the members' efforts combined with a groundswell of public support to win the day. The ministry rescinded the layoffs and language in CUPE 2745's new collective agreement prevents them from trying to lay the workers off again.

### **Front-line experience and expertise drive the fight against privatization in health care**

Many of the issues exposed by the COVID-19 crisis remain unresolved in Canada's health care system. At the Health Care Sector Council meeting, delegates focused on the most pressing threats including the continued push toward privatization.

The Council received a presentation on an interim CUPE report—initiated through a 2023 CUPE National Convention resolution—exploring the impacts of privatization in health care. The report reveals disturbing national trends, including rising medical fees creating a two-tier system, growing reliance on for-profit agencies, private long-term care, virtual care and artificial intelligence, and increased use of private-public partnerships in facility management.

A panel discussion with health care members Debra Maxfield, Cheryl Anne Koughan, and Bonnie Hammermeister highlighted challenges and victories at the bargaining table, addressing staffing issues, and increasing violence in the workplace. The message was clear: lasting change begins with collective worker action.

The Council also heard from Kevin Skerrett, adjunct professor at Carleton University's Institute for Political Economy, who underscored the risks of privatization, pointing to real cases of corruption and malpractice in private clinics.

### **Communications sector confronts job losses, outsourcing, and AI disruptions**

The Communications sector has undergone significant upheaval in recent years. At the sectoral meeting, members shared concerns about ongoing challenges, focusing on the outsourcing of jobs overseas and the threats to Canadian control of the telecommunications industry.

Delegates emphasized the need for a stronger public understanding of the role of a healthy communications sector, backed by a CUPE awareness raising campaign, especially within the context of a new Canadian economic nationalism.

The delegates concluded with a discussion of the fights to come. Amid a shifting landscape – where traditional media will continue to face pressure from rapid technological change and media, telecommunications and production are all threatened by the development of artificial intelligence that is quickly outpacing a slow-to-change regulatory framework – the delegates discussed the urgency for increasing pressure on the CRTC to protect Canadian jobs, Canadian ownership of telecommunications infrastructure, and Canadian data sovereignty.

### **A human must stay on board: CUPE transportation workers demand safety and adequate funding**

CUPE members working in public transit, school buses, and accessible transportation came together to speak out against the ongoing lack of recognition for their work, the instability caused by inconsistent government funding, and pervasive safety issues. Delegates raised concerns about the increasing use of subcontracting, warning that

privatization is undermining service quality, working conditions, and public accountability.

Health and safety was a major theme at the Transportation sector caucus. Delegates reported frequent physical and psychological harm, with verbal abuse being especially common. "Workers are responsible for the well-being of passengers. That has to be respected," said one delegate.

Also discussed was the growing role of artificial intelligence in the sector and the need for locals to proactively bargain language to ensure that a human will always be on board, even when self-driving vehicles become more common. This protection, delegates agreed, must be secured now before automation becomes more widespread.

Delegates concluded with a positive vision, stressing that public investment in transit and transportation has many knock-on benefits, from increasing worker safety and service quality, to addressing the cost-of-living crisis and reducing the impacts of climate change.

### **Social services workers: holding our communities together**

The Social Services sector caucus room was covered in sticky notes, each marked with a word that captured how workers across the country are feeling: *overworked*, *burnt out*, *undervalued*, *frustrated*.

Those words set the tone for an open, honest discussion about a workforce stretched beyond its limits, grappling with unsafe working conditions and crushing workloads.

"This work is the glue that holds our society together," said Sheryl Burns, President of CUPE 1936. "Without us, society would crumble, and yet people aren't feeling respect for the work that we do."

Delegates heard research findings that showed access to health benefits and adequate leave provisions remain a top priority for members, along with better supports for casual and part-time staff. Participants discussed the daily impacts of underfunding and overwork, how these pressures compromise safety, and who in their workplaces is most

affected by inequities. When asked who in the room holds more than one job, about a third of attendees raised their hands.

The session closed with a task for members to reflect on what keeps them going despite these challenges. Their reflections will guide the ongoing fight to win the respect, resources, and recognition social services workers deserve.

### **CUPE Municipal delegates rally around striking locals and shared struggles**

With the cost of living rising and more work being handed to private, for-profit companies, CUPE's Municipal sector caucus shared hard-fought victories and strategies to boost member mobilization.

Delegates noted that even within the same province, they face different employers and political climates, making the sector feel fragmented. To address this, several provinces have started organizing municipal sector groups—formally and informally—to coordinate efforts, share ideas, and support one another. This growing solidarity has strengthened locals on and off the picket line.

Regional reports showed that despite geographic differences, members face similar challenges. Frustrations are growing and more locals are preparing for or entering strikes. Top issues include wages, inadequate benefit plans, pension concerns, and resistance to privatization.

Underscoring the state of the sector, two locals were unable to send their full delegations as CUPE 830, Charlottetown Municipal Water and Sewage, and CUPE 1544, Timmins Transit Employees, are currently on strike. Representatives shared updates on their struggles and delegates expressed full solidarity and the hopes for swift, fair resolutions.

Delegates also submitted resolutions on artificial intelligence, anti-privatization support, and workplace health and safety—key tools in the ongoing fight to protect public services and good jobs.

### **"PSE is the backbone!": CUPE members defend the future of post-secondary education**

Members of CUPE's Post-Secondary Education (PSE) sector gathered to identify key challenges and strategize on how to advance labour movement values within their institutions.

Glynnis Lieb, member of CUPE 3911 and co-chair of CUPE's PSE Sector council, outlined urgent issues: privatization, contracting out, right-wing attacks on equity-focused programs, crackdowns on free expression, and major budget cuts made more challenging by new federal caps on international student enrolment.

"We're experiencing layoffs, seeing work transferred to other units, and witnessing our printing jobs being contracted out," said Tiffany McLaughlin from CUPE 1858. "The goal is to employ fewer of us—so write those grievances!" added fellow CUPE 1858 member Quinn Ramsay.

Delegates also discussed the growing impact of artificial intelligence on academic and support work and called for action to reverse chronic underfunding. "If we're serious about building a more diverse, sovereign economy in Canada, we must invest in post-secondary education, said CUPE BC President Karen Ranalletta.

Erynne Grant of CUPE 2081 underscored the sector's foundational role: "Without post-secondary education, there are few pathways for people to gain the skills and training needed elsewhere. PSE is the backbone."

### **Airline Division sets sights on ending unpaid work at 2025 convention**

Ending unpaid work in the airline industry has dominated headlines in Canada this year – and it dominated the agenda at this year's Airline Division convention too.

Delegates debated resolutions on changing the Canada Labour Code to ban unpaid work, and repealing Section 107 of the Code to prevent the federal government from short-circuiting job action and Charter rights in the future.

Mark Hancock and Candace Rennick also visited Convention to pledge the national union's support to end unpaid work at the bargaining table and through federal legislation. Former NDP MP Bonita Zarrillo also visited to give members an inside look at her efforts to end unpaid work through a private member's bill, Bill C-415, in the last



Parliament, which would have required airlines to pay flight attendants for all hours worked at their full rate of pay.

National staff also provided an update on the Division's ongoing Unpaid Work Won't Fly campaign, and where it will go next with members at WestJet and PAL currently in bargaining, and other locals going to the bargaining table soon.

The Airline Division also celebrated its growth by welcoming two new locals this year, including 65 new members at Air North and 1200 new members at Porter.

Delegates were also introduced to the Critical Incident Stress Management program, which will support members in the aftermath of traumatic incidents in the workplace. The program is set to launch in Spring 2026.