

Hit the refresh button: New training goes back to basics

BY WES PAYNE, CUPE NATIONAL

Debera Willis hasn't been in the health and safety game as long as some CUPE activists, but she's got a pretty good handle on what it takes to make a difference.

"I got involved because members were taking a lot of risks, feeling that they had to take risks in order to hold their employment," said Willis, a member of the Hospital Employees' Union, working as a licensed practical nurse at the hospital in 100 Mile House, B.C.

A ten-year nursing veteran, Willis was recently appointed to her first term on CUPE's national health and safety committee. She's got a keen sense of what it takes to inspire members in the workplace.

After watching too many workers end up on LTD with back problems from moving patients without a lift, Willis and a few allies decided to take initiative and push their colleagues to use lifts to move patients. "It's about workload, and it's about people thinking they don't have time, and thinking that it won't happen to them, so it became about education for me," said Willis.

They significantly reduced the number of back injuries sustained by workers at the hospital.

"How did we do that? Just by constantly, you know, not badgering them, but showing our colleagues that there's an easier way to do this. Let's work together and do this," said Willis.

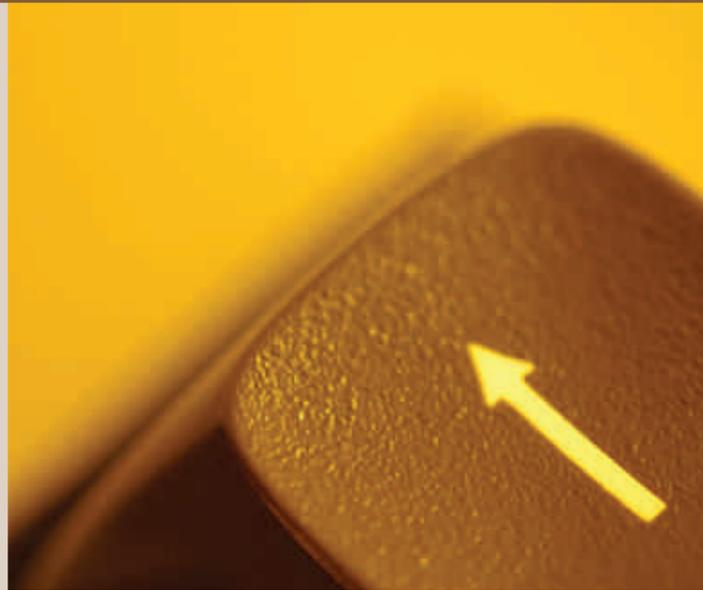
It's that type of activism that CUPE is hoping to inspire with a new nine-hour course on health and safety.

More advanced than the three hour health and safety block in the Steward Learning Series, this new course is designed to empower new and experienced activists new to health and safety.

The course covers the duties of health and safety representatives, explains how to identify hazards in the workplace and the process for dealing with them, and provides an overview of basic health and safety rights.

Minerva Porelle, member of CUPE 3392 and long-time health and safety activist, was on the advisory committee that helped shape the course.

"I felt like I was right back to 21 years ago. I thought, okay, this is why I got involved," Porelle said about developing the back-to-basics approach the new course offers.



"Some long-time activists are in a place now that, we're so involved, we're active all the time and we kind of forget what it was to be a new union member—that you don't always understand certain things or you don't even know what a collective agreement is. It's really good to visit our roots

again and remind ourselves why we got involved."

The new course will pilot in November 2012, and is expected to be offered to CUPE locals beginning in 2013. ✨

THE UNITED LEADER



Winter 2013

INTERNATIONAL UNION ROUND TABLE ON ENERGY

Unions talk energy, CUPE lays out its perspective

CUPE was represented at an international conference involving unions from 15 different countries discussing energy issues from the perspective of working people.

National Secretary Treasurer Charles Fleury and representatives of labour organizations in a range of industries participated in the *Energy Emergency, Energy Transition roundtable* held in

New York City this October. The event was organized by Cornell University's Global Labor Institute.

"Global warming is a reality," says Fleury. "Given the urgency of facing current energy challenges from the viewpoint of sustainable development, it is important for us to pool our ideas, learn from one another, identify solutions and take positive steps to address the problem."

Fleury took advantage of the event's plenary session and workshops to outline the thinking behind the energy policy adopted by CUPE in 2009. CUPE locals in Quebec's energy sector tabled, and convinced CUPE's 2007 convention, to adopt a resolution calling for CUPE to develop an energy policy. CUPE represents employees in the energy sector across the country, including

employees of Alberta based utilities like EPCOR and ENMAX.

Historic Initiative by CUPE

"Before identifying the most promising energy options, we needed to analyze the nature of the energy market around us, identify current and future requirements, as well as supply sources, both existing and new, for meeting these requirements," Fleury explained. "Subsequent to this process, CUPE chose to focus on renewable energies such as hydroelectricity, wind, solar and biomass energy.

"At the same time, CUPE agreed that it was important not to abandon other existing energy sources but rather to allow for a transition period to provide workers in these sectors an opportunity



CUPE Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury

to continue working while learning new skills so they can eventually work in the energy sectors of the future," he con-

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CUPE is growing in Alberta

CUPE continues to grow in the province of Alberta. In the first eight months of 2012, CUPE's membership numbers grew by 2,000 – including 500 from new organizing campaigns. Employees at Prairie Land School Division, Rotary House, Marshall House, The Gardens Long Term Care, the Red Deer Landfill and three Womens' Shelters have all successfully joined CUPE this year alone.

CUPE membership in Alberta now stands at 35,000 – the highest it's ever been. ✨



CUPE 3550 member Gloria Lepine joined CUPE members and aboriginal activists in Ottawa on October 4th to protest the lack of attention being given to 582 documents cases of murdered and missing aboriginal women. Lepine was instrumental in the distribution and collection of 4,000 postcards calling on the Harper Government to launch a public enquiry into the matter.

Upcoming events

Be sure to check www.alberta.cupe.ca for more details.

Jan 26th –
CUPE Alberta Executive Meeting – Edmonton

March 20th –
CUPE Alberta Convention – Fort McMurray

March 23rd –
Education Day – Fort McMurray

April 27th –
Alberta Education Employees Committee Meeting – Calgary

Calgary municipal locals promote public workers

CALGARY – Three CUPE locals representing 8,400 members working for the City of Calgary have invested in promoting the role of city employees building communities.

"Making Calgary work for you" is the theme of the ads running on radio, TV, and community newspapers.

"Calgarians are justifiably proud of our city," said CUPE 38 President Peter Marsden. "And many of the things we love about it are made possible by CUPE members doing their jobs."

"We keep the parks beautiful, we keep the city safe and clean, and we provide a range of recreational services," added CUPE 37 President Don Monroe. "These things are not possible without a strong city workforce."

CUPE 709 President Dave Malden noted that working for the city isn't 'just a job' for many members. "We live here too, we want Calgary to be the best place in the world to live, and we see it as our responsibility to make that happen." ✨



Council challenged on secret decision to run SE LRT privately

Public Interest Alberta, the CUPE 30, and the Amalgamated Transit Union 569, challenged Edmonton City Council on a secret decision to run the Southeast rapid transit project (LRT) privately.

City Council made this decision at a closed door meeting on August 29, 2012. Many sources have confirmed that City Council made this decision under pressure from the federal government, in order to qualify for federal infrastructure funding.

On August 29, 2012, City Council met closed door, and voted to change their application for funding from the federal government's P3 Canada Fund to include the privatization of all operations. Numerous sources have confirmed that the Federal Government made it clear that it would not give federal infrastructure funding to the project unless City Council agreed to the full privatization of the Southeast LRT. City Council overturned an earlier 7 – 6 decision to run the LRT in house.

"We are shocked that City Council made such an important decision without public discussion, behind closed doors, and overturning a previous decision that was made in

public," says Bill Moore-Kilgannon, Executive Director of Public Interest Alberta. "I can't imagine what legitimate justification City Council would have for having made this critical decision in camera."

"Other cities like Vancouver, Ottawa and Waterloo have received federal funding to expand their public LRT systems without having to privatize the operations, so I don't know why Council felt it should gamble our success a private corporation running the Southeast LRT line," said Stu Litwinowich, President of Amalgamated Transit Union local 569. "Privatizing the new LRT operations would be bad for the City and bad for the citizens of Edmonton!"

"The federal government should not be forcing Edmonton City Council to turn over operations of the SE LRT to a private company by dangling a \$300 million carrot (paid with our tax dollars) in front of them," said Mike Scott, President of CUPE Local 30. "A recent report issued by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities about the perils of P3 agreements proves that many P3 agreements across this country are failing. And when they fail, it ends up costing us all far more in the long run."



Edmonton's current LRT is run by Edmonton Transit, however new stages will be run by a private, for profit corporation. Photo courtesy of Mack Male

"We are calling on the Citizens of Edmonton to send a strong message to City Council that it does not make sense to turn over LRT operations to the private sector and that they need to hold a public consultation before making the decision to privatize public transit. For more information and to send a message to City Council, go to www.piaalberta.org. ✨

The United Leader

The United Leader is produced by the CUPE Alberta Newsletter committee:

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Do you have stories that need to be told? Photos that do the talking for you? Want to rant in a letter to the editor? Please send your content to Lou Arab (larab@cupe.ca)

Unions talk energy, CUPE lays out its perspective

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tinued. "Ongoing economic development is part of the equation. It is also important to engage in research and innovation to reduce pollution."

In this regard, CUPE is in favour of refurbishing existing nuclear plants. The exploitation of oil and gas resources should also continue, but at a slower pace and with more controls in place.

CUPE's National Secretary-Treasurer also underscored an essential aspect

of the organization's energy vision: public ownership and control.

"Energy must not be left in the hands of private companies placing profit ahead of everything else," he asserted. "Control needs to be public and the government must make the decisions after consulting the people. That is how an energy democracy works."

According to Fleury, in addition to these rights, citizens have certain duties in relation to energy, including reducing energy consumption at home, limiting travel and changing

their shopping habits. In Quebec, for example, transportation is responsible for nearly 40% of all greenhouse gas emissions.

Global Objectives, Different Solutions

Charles Fleury hopes that CUPE's experience will be useful to its union allies worldwide. It is important, however, to acknowledge that there is no one-size-fits-all solution and that the approaches adopted around the world may vary based on each

country's development level and unique circumstances.

"Energy solutions could vary widely from one country to the next due to each country's particular context," he said. "Unfortunately, to meet the needs of populations with limited access to energy, some countries find it easier and less expensive to build polluting coal-fired power plants than to use solar or wind energy. Given this reality, unions, governments and international organizations can clearly play a role in terms of promoting balanced energy development around the world." ✨

CUPE shows solidarity with workers at Edmonton Catholic Schools

EDMONTON – On every day of a three week strike by Edmonton Catholic School support workers, members of CUPE 3550 walked the picket lines. On every Friday, the CUPE local provided lunch for 300 picketers.

"The issues faced by support staff at Edmonton Catholic are exactly the same as the issues faced by our members at Edmonton Public," said Carol Chapman, President of CUPE 3550.

"We've been on strike; we know what it means to walk a picket line. And if

we can help them win better hours and pay, it will be that much easier at our bargaining table."

Members of CEP Local 52A, who represent administrative staff and educational assistants at the Catholic board, struck after being unable to win reasonable wage increases. It was the first strike by non-teaching staff in the 124 year history of the Catholic District.

Elaine Cardinal, VP of the local, thanked those who assisted her members, and made a special mention of CUPE.

"We found solidarity in our brothers and sisters of other locals. You supported us with your visits, financially, we felt empowered by the support of the entire union movement," said Cardinal while speaking to a National Convention of CEP members. "I have to tell you a story about our sisters from CUPE, not only did they deliver lunch for 300 members every Friday on the picket line, they walked with us every day on the picket line." ✨



CUPE 3550 members were out in force to support the CEP strike at Edmonton

Labour Board rules in CUPE's favour regarding Calgary Zoo employees

CALGARY -- CUPE 37 has won a Labour Relations Board case against the Calgary Zoo Society after successfully arguing that the Society

and the City constitute a 'common employer'. The Zoo Society argued that after 42 years of using city employees who belong to CUPE 37, they should be able to terminate that arrangement and opt out of collective agreement provisions.

In a decision released October 10th, the Board found that the Zoo and the City were common employers, and that the Zoo could not proceed to replace union workers with others earning lower wages.

The City did not take a position in the hearing.

"This issue was about cutting wages and working conditions to employees who have worked at the Zoo for years," said CUPE 37 President Don Monroe. "The Society admitted as much at the hearing, and we're grateful the board wouldn't allow it."

"As a common employer, the Zoo has an obligation to respect the negotiated terms and conditions that have been agreed to over a relationship spanning four decades," said Monroe.

Monroe says that now that the Labour Board decision is behind them, he hopes the union, the Zoo, and the City can concentrate on building their relationships and continuing to provide a world class Zoo to the people of Calgary. ✨



Calgary Zoo employees won an important victory after their employer tried to strip them of their union rights.

Higher fees and underfunding in Alberta senior's facilities



CUPE members working in Alberta's long term care facilities are seeing first-hand the effects of underfunding on residents.

EDMONTON – CUPE Alberta has lent its support to a call by municipalities for better funding for Seniors' Lodges.

Delegates to the Alberta Urban Municipal Association convention this fall debated a resolution calling on the Redford government to reverse cuts to Seniors' Lodges and fund infrastructure and building improvements.

CUPE Alberta President Marle Roberts says her union, which represents almost 6,000 health care and seniors' care employees in the province, has seen the impact of underfunding first hand.

"For the last decade, the Alberta government has been trying to get out of the business of seniors care and pass it off to the private sector," said Roberts. "The decision to cap funding for lodges was part of that strategy – let public facilities crumble and push seniors to more and more costly private options."

"We need public options, and seniors without deep pockets need lodges. Municipalities recognize that, and it's time the Redford government did too."

Roberts said many of the facilities CUPE members work in are in need of repair. "But without provincial funding, it's the seniors who are asked to foot the bills, and they can't."

In a related release, CUPE said the government is making up for its underfunding of seniors facilities by breaking an election promise to maintain a cap on seniors' fees. The Redford government recently announced a five per cent increase in the fees across the board.

Marle Roberts said Alison Redford campaigned on a promise to keep the cap on seniors' fees in place. "Increasing the amount care centres can charge our seniors tears up that promise," said Roberts.

The increase in fees, along with the ever present push by the government to put seniors into higher cost, private facilities, means a greater burden for our residents.

"Over the last 15 years, the trend in Alberta has been towards crumbling facilities and higher fees. Alison Redford promised something different – our seniors deserve more than broken promises." ✨

Public private partnerships add 16% to costs: study

A study by the University of Toronto shows public private partnerships (P3s) add 16% to the cost of infrastructure projects they are used for.

The study examined 28 Ontario P3 projects worth more than \$7 Billion. On average, because of the higher borrowing costs incurred by private interests, costs increased 16%.

Both the federal and provincial Conservative governments have been pushing the use of P3s over conventional government financing, claiming cost savings.

The last two waves of new schools were built with P3s, and the Edmonton City Council recently had no choice but to use a P3 for a new LRT line after the Harper government said it would not fund the project if council chose conventional means.

CUPE Alberta Marle Roberts is renewing her call to scrap the private building and maintenance of schools.

"The Redford government has been using P3s for the building of new schools," said Roberts. "So taxpayers are charged more than necessary."

Roberts suggested the government chose the P3 model because it keeps debt off the books.

"The Conservatives claim that because we choose this model, we have no debt on it," explained Roberts. "But we are committed to payments for 30 years, and those payments are higher than they need to be."

"No wonder they can't balance their budget."

A copy of the study can be found at www.alberta.cupe.ca ✨

Allegations of financial mismanagement, staff cuts leave Glenbow Museum employees reeling

CALGARY -- CUPE 1645 members at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary received notice of layoffs and drastic job reductions over the summer. Front-line staff were slashed with the remainder to have their hours significantly cut. On the management side, the reductions were much more modest with only long vacant positions being eliminated.

"As staff we feared this day for years," said Local President Kim Hallis. "We all knew the deficits for the last 3 years have been over \$1 million."

"Our members are passionate about the museum collections and keeping our history alive," said Hallis. "The cuts

will severely impact the museum's collections and the museum's ability to serve the public.

"So in addition to the hardships the affected workers and their families will endure, the remaining employees will work in an increasingly stressful environment and Albertans will see a very different Glenbow Museum."

Hallis further explained that the union executive went to management repeatedly to voice concerns about the budget and workload. "Our members are taking the hit for poor financial decisions made by management and the Board over the last several years." ✨



Employees of the Glenbow Museum were devastated by cutbacks caused largely by financial mismanagement

'Sock it to 'em' campaign hits ten year mark

LETHBRIDGE - For the 10th year in a row, the CUPE 290 has led an effort to collect warm socks for Lethbridge and area charities.

Retired member Gail Petrie has spearheaded the drive, which has collected over 60,000 pairs of socks to date. The socks are collected by staff, students and parents in the schools of three local school districts. The socks are passed on to five local charities serving women, teens, homeless and others. ✨