

Voice



Fall 2013

Redford government takes an axe to our pensions

If you are planning on retiring early after a long career, you might want to check the terms of your pension plan.

If the Redford government has its way, you may not be able to collect a pension until you are 65, no matter how long you have been paying into your plan.

The Alberta government has announced big changes to the Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) affecting hundreds of thousands of workers, including 25,000 CUPE members. Included in their cuts are:

- A gradual end to early retirement. The 'rule of 85' will no longer be in place. We will have to work longer before we can collect a pension. This alone amounts to a 20% reduction in overall benefits paid.

- No more guaranteed indexing of pension benefits. Instead of benefits being indexed to 60% of inflation, they will now be indexed to only 50%, when funds allow.
- A cap on pension premiums. This could starve the system of revenue and necessitate the need for more cuts later on. This radically changes the defined benefit nature of the plan for future service. This dramatically shifts risk from the government to plan members.

The Minister of Finance says he is making the cuts to cover a deficit in the plan, but CUPE Alberta President Marle Roberts called the changes 'radical' and said they were not necessary.

"There is a very reasonable arrangement within the plan that has both sides (employers and employees)

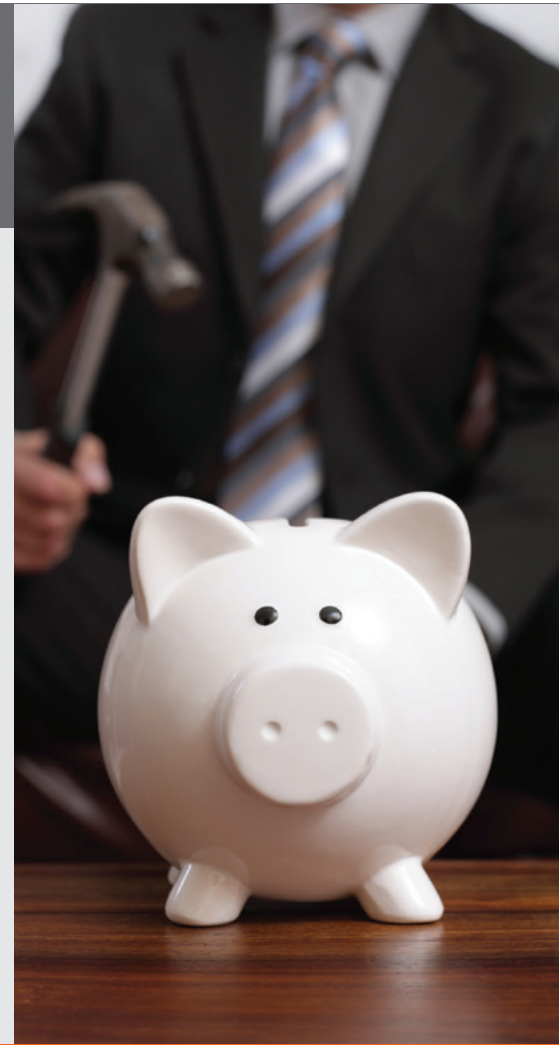
currently paying between 3-4% of payroll towards the liability," said Roberts. "By law the plan must pay its liability off within 15 years."

Roberts noted that the pension plans being cut do not pay huge dividends, and that retirees were going to suffer under the cuts.

"Our pension plan is not 'gold plated'. On the contrary, it is very modest. The average LAPP pension is just under \$15,000 per year"

CUPE is working with other public sector unions and the Alberta Federation of Labour to fight the cuts.

Find out more at www.defendingalbertapensions.ca.



VOICE, the new, um, voice of CUPE Alberta

After several years, the CUPE Alberta Newsletter Committee decided this newsletter needed some fresh paint and a few renovations. Among the first change, this publication is hereby known as "VOICE". Watch for more changes in future issues. ✿

Inside: CUPE turns 50



We need to talk...

No we're not breaking up with you.

But the labour movement has to talk to its members a lot more, and listen a lot better.

With our pensions under attack, and some Canadian politicians speaking openly about legislation that would make it near impossible for unions to even exist, we need to make sure our members understand what is at stake, how important unions are, and what we need to do to win better wages and working conditions.

Union activists need to hear from members about how well we are representing them, what they want to achieve, and what issues matter to them.

'Unite for Fairness' is CUPE's effort to continually reach out and speak personally with each of our 627,000 members. Unions across the country have begun similar projects. Under the banner Together Fairness Works, affiliates of the Canadian Labour Congress are uniting to connect with members and celebrate the value of unions.

We want to build stronger connections between members and their union. We're asking every CUPE Local to connect with members, one at a time, and begin a conversation with them about the value of their union.

This project will transform the way we connect with members on the issues that matter to them. We want members to know we're listening. If members have issues in their

workplace or in their community, we want to be there to help.

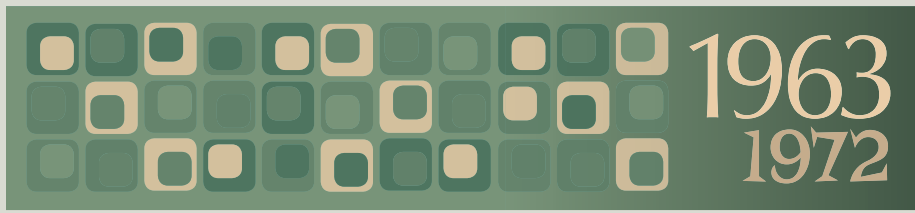
We want to make sure we stay connected with members by asking them to sign a card with their contact information, and by following up with them as needed.

For more information, visit www.uniteforfairness.ca. ✿

unite FOR FAIRNESS

uniteforfairness.ca

CUPE is 50



1963
NUPE and NUPSE merge to form CUPE.

1968
CUPE Alberta membership hits 10,000.

1968
CUPE 40 strike at Calgary Board of Education.

1970
1,100 members of CUPE 474 and 784 go on strike against Edmonton Public School District for 11 days, closing all schools. A committee of 100 students was formed to assist in the strike effort. One of the main issues in the strike was wages for male caretakers (wages for women caretakers were settled before job action).



June 11, 1973
CUPE 41 goes on strike for eight weeks at Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton.

May 22, 1974
CUPE 1606 (Town of Wainwright) go on wildcat strike.

1974
CUPE 1606 (Buffalo Trail School Division) on strike for nine days.

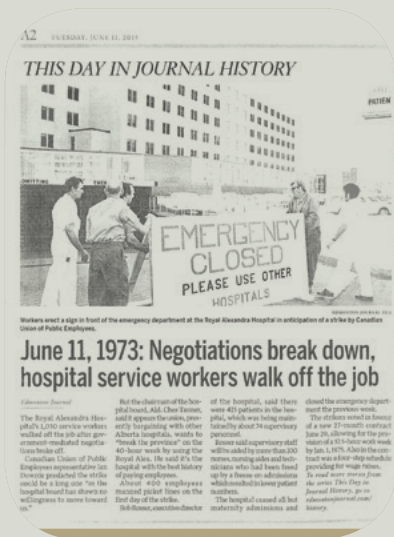
1974
Edith Kiehlbach is appointed as a National Representative, possibly the first woman rep in Alberta.

March 1977
CUPE 41 strike begins at Parkland Nursing Home, Edmonton, lasts 26 months, putting the state of private nursing homes under a microscope for the first time. Fifteen hundred people attended a rally at the Legislature in support of the strikers.

June 1977
First CUPE Alberta week long school, Olds Alberta.



In 1978, CUPE 37 went on strike against the City of Calgary for 55 days. The strike was long and bitter, but in the end, workers won a shorter work week.



In 1973, CUPE 41 staged an eight week long strike at the Royal Alexandria Hospital in Edmonton.

March 1978
The beginning of a bitter, 55 day strike between CUPE 37 and the City of Calgary. The Local gains a four day work week.

November 1978
Twenty-two hundred members, at 17 hospitals strike to protest government wage guidelines of 6%. Inflation at the time was 9% annually.



National President Grace Hartman addresses CUPE 38 members on strike against the City of Calgary in 1980.

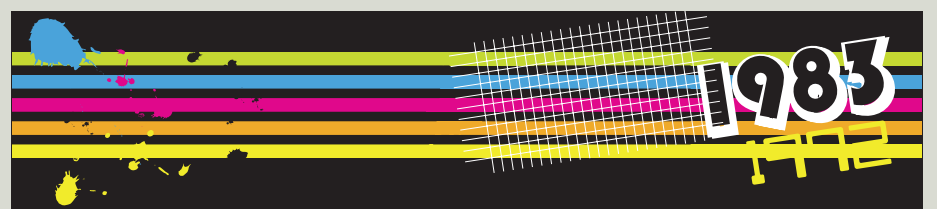
July 1980
CUPE 38 holds a 13 day strike against the City of Calgary.

March 1981
CUPE 70 (City of Lethbridge) makes big gains after three week strike.

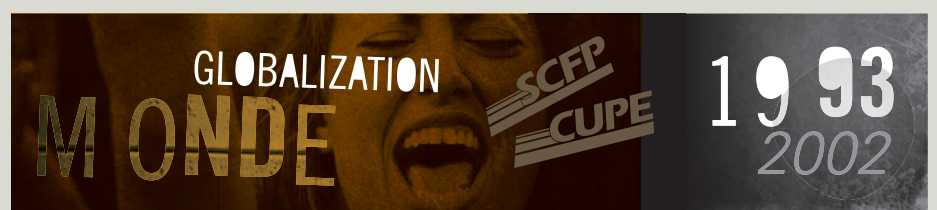
Summer, 1981
CUPE 812 goes on strike against the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass, organizes a successful boycott of Highway 3 to bring the strike to an end.

January 1982
CUPE 520 members at Calgary Catholic schools strike for a week to earn 17% wage increase. Due to poor finances at CUPE National, members did not receive any strike pay.

1982
CUPE 1606 goes on strike against Buffalo Trail School Division, wins a 30% wage settlement.



1986
CUPE 2550 goes on strike for 10 weeks at Thibault Roman Catholic School Division (now called the Greater St. Albert Catholic School Division).



November 14, 1995
CUPE 8 laundry workers at Calgary Hospital stage a 10 day, illegal walkout to protect their jobs.

June 1997
Rather than take roll backs, CUPE 38 goes five years without a contract finally accepting a deal with wage freezes and modest increases.



In 2004, CUPE 1606 went on strike against the Buffalo Trail School Division for one week. The strike was the local's third against the School District, and fourth overall, making CUPE 1606 arguably the 'strikiest' Local in the province.



In 2009, legislation took paramedics and other health care workers out of CUPE without a vote. Paramedics worried that their supplementary pension plan would be lost. Not only did they lose their pension plan, the Conservatives compounded the pain by further cutting the pension plan they were forced into.

Fall 2003

CUPE loses 6,200 health care members to AUPE in reorganization and representation votes across the province.



2013

CUPE hits 35,000 members in Alberta – higher than ever before.

Fall 2005

CUPE 4655 goes on strike against Casino Calgary for 45 days in Alberta's first casino job action. The often violent strike ends with a first contract for CUPE members.

A lot fewer staff in Alberta schools this year

The staff rooms of Alberta schools are feeling empty this year.

Which is odd, considering the classrooms are more crowded than ever.

Thanks to minimal funding increases from the Redford governments, Alberta schools are facing the year with more students than ever, but fewer staff to teach them.

"Our school district laid off record numbers of staff in June to make up for Alison Redford's funding shortfall," said Carol Chapman, President of CUPE 3550 (Edmonton Public School support staff). "The reduction in funding will

result in larger class sizes with less educational supports and programs for all of our students."

Chapman said that the Progressive Conservative government has put schools into a situation where they must offer "less with less."

"This is not what our students and their parents deserve," said Chapman.

CUPE Alberta President Marle Roberts said Edmonton public schools have at least 350 fewer educational assistants, custodial workers and trades people than last year.

"In almost every school division across the province, trustees are laying off teachers and staff to make up for Alison Redford's broken promise to provide stable education funding," said Roberts.

The government claims it increased funding for education by 0.6%. But when increased enrollment and inflation are taken into account, it means less."

"Without these employees, schools will be dirtier, less safe, and will provide fewer supports for students and teachers - who will also be fewer in numbers," said Roberts. "The state of our education is crumbling, and everyone pays for it." ❀



With fewer Educational Assistants and other staff in the classrooms, there won't be as much time for kids.

Young worker profiles

Crystal Chan and Cesar Agudelo both attended "All-in, Our union, Our future" a CUPE young workers strategy session this summer in Montreal. Both Crystal and Cesar work at the Calgary Workers' Resource Centre, a charitable, non-profit organization that provides representation and advocacy for workers who have employment related issues including Employment Insurance, Employment Standards, Human Rights, Workers' Compensation, and Canada Pension Plan Disability.

How did you get involved with CUPE?

Crystal: I became involved in CUPE with the encouragement of my co-worker. When I started my position, she introduced herself as the steward and pushed me to attend meetings. I started becoming very interested in the role of the union after that and took some courses to learn more about it. When my co-worker stepped down as steward, she recommended that I put my name forward and was very supportive.

Cesar: At first I participated in the Local's meeting, but then I got involved in CUPE when I ran for

the Recording-Secretary Position of the Local executive. Given the nature of my work, a lot of which involves providing union like services to non-unionized workers, I considered it only natural to continue walking the walk and contribute to my own Local.

Why did you attend the strategy session in Montreal?

Crystal: I believe that the Union serves an important function. We hold employers accountable for their actions so employees can be treated more fairly, but we also improve employment standards for non-unionized workplaces as well. The public perception regarding unions has become more negative and I feel that it is important to engage young workers and educate them on how it is still a relevant and vital institution.

Cesar: Unions, like any institution, need an infusion of new ideas and energy, the source of which generally comes from young people with passion and vision. The Montreal convention seemed like an excellent forum to network with like minded youth who

see the importance of evolving and growing the role of unions in our society. Also, because of the treatment my clients go through due to the lack of proper protections - protections a union could provide - I think it is imperative to re-energize the union movement and connect today's workforce to the benefits unionization can bring to the workplace, and by extension, communities.

Why is it important to get more young workers involved in CUPE?

Crystal: The foundation of the union is solidarity and strength in numbers. It is absolutely necessary to engage young workers as it is the only way the union will remain strong. Without new workers willing to become active in the union and continue fighting for workers' rights, the union will gradually dissolve.

Cesar: With the advent of the retiring baby boomers and the fluidity of work in today's market, I believe unions need to adapt faster and better to the new conditions. They need to in order to continue their invaluable contribution



to workers, families and communities. Young workers are the main source of creative ways of responding to the new environment. It seems only natural that we get these young people involved and interested in the union movement, and allow them to modernize and influence the movement's future. ✿

Rethink childcare

After housing costs, child care is likely the biggest expense working families face.

But the state of quality child care in Canada is terrible.

About 78% of Canadian children cannot access licensed childcare. That means that almost four out of five children needing care are put in unlicensed spots or, are cared for by friends or relatives as a favour to the parents.

If parents can find licensed child care, they face a bill of \$1,000 or more per month. Putting it out of reach for far too many.

It doesn't have to be this bad. Quebec and Manitoba have provincial child care programs. In Manitoba, licensed child care costs \$15/day. In Quebec, it's only \$7 per day.

These programs have paid for themselves. In Quebec, the child care program has resulted in a 3.8% increase of women in the workforce. Their increased incomes and taxes paid on that income, pays for the child care program.

One of Stephen Harper's first acts in power was to cancel agreements with provinces and territories for early learning and care and cut \$1 billion in funding. He replaced it with a monthly payment directly to parents – an amount that barely covers a couple of nights of babysitting.

CUPE is working with the Canadian Labour Congress and other unions to build a national child care system. We need to hear your child care stories. Please visit www.rethinkchildcare.ca and let us know how Canada's child care is working for you. ✿



Voice

VOICE is produced by the CUPE Alberta Newsletter committee:

Deborah Stewart
Bryan Firth
Irena McEachnie
Stephanie Lustig
Ed Hanson, Education Representative
Editor: Lou Arab, Communications Representative
Graphic Design: Jocelyn Renaud, CUPE Communications

Back issues are available at www.alberta.cupe.ca

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)

New members join CUPE

Several new groups have recently voted to join CUPE, including:

- The Edmonton Garrison Military Family Resource Society -the first unionized military day care in Canada.
- Seventy-nine transit operators for the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Transit System.
- Auxiliary nursing employees at Revera Heartland Retirement Living voted 100% in favour of joining CUPE.
- Seven employees of the Town of Bowden. ✿