

UNITING for TOMORROW



S'UNIR pour DEMAIN

CONVENTION - CONGRÈS

MAY 1-5 MAI 2023

TORONTO, ONTARIO

Action Plan

2023-2027

Canadian Union of Postal Workers
Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes

cupw • sttp

CUPW ACTION PLAN

ESTABLISHING REALISTIC OBJECTIVES

TO STRENGTHEN OUR UNION

Our primary purpose as a union is to improve the working lives of our members. Traditionally, collective bargaining and taking strike actions have been the main vehicles to enforce our demands. Since the 80s, these rights have been fundamentally undermined by the government using back-to-work legislation with financial penalties. If we are committed to fulfilling our purpose, we must build up our union to be formidable enough to make free collective bargaining the path of least resistance for Canada Post (CPC) and the government. Defying back-to-work legislation is a last resort but it is also a possibility that we must take concrete steps to be considered a legitimate threat by the boss.

Hundreds of years of labour struggle have taught us that power will never concede without a fight. As it stands, CUPW is not well positioned to take on this fight, let alone win it. If we are serious about eventually winning, we must take deliberate steps that begin with an honest evaluation of where we are at as an organization, proceed by assessing our strengths and areas where we can improve, and arrive at a full commitment to. The objectives that follow are clear, measurable, and realistically attainable.

FOUNDATIONAL UNITY

Our membership also expects the different levels of leadership in the union (Local, Regional & National) to coordinate their efforts to actively support the campaigns and objectives of the union. To this end, CUPW should further commit to nurturing a culture of competence and cooperation where every officer and representative feels supported in the work they were elected to do and understands what standards of communication should be adhered to and modeled for our membership.

OBJECTIVE 1: Strengthen Administrative Foundations

A one-week orientation and on-boarding course will be developed by the Education department, in cooperation with the Secretariat, and the IT department, before August 2023. This course will be mandatory for all elected National and Regional officers and representatives, even those returning to office in whatever capacity, and will be delivered by National office before September 2023. The content of this course will, at minimum, include:

- Understanding the National Policy binder and organizational chart of CUPW
- Working with our administrative assistants (COPE 225) and department staff (CUPE 1979) within the parameters of their respective collective agreements
- How compensation and benefits are adjusted for your new role (pension, benefits, work schedule, using leave, entitlements, etc.)
- Utilizing interpretation services and expense reports
- Software suite orientation, digital security protocol, knowledge transfer, and digital file management best-practice

Office orientation and personnel training are essential standards to create a more supportive workplace. Our constitution acknowledges the need for this under section 4.03. We fight for better conditions for our members because we value creating a better work-life balance for all workers; these conditions should also be extended to our officers and representatives. The sooner this is implemented, the sooner it becomes an automatic part of our operations going forward, the sooner our leadership can be more administratively effective in their roles. This should be done purely on the principle of CUPW being a pro-worker worker-led organization but has the added benefits of increasing office morale going into negotiations and curbing the number of people leaving leadership roles.

OBJECTIVE 2: Nurturing Solidarity Between Members

CUPW, like many other similar organizations, faces the challenge that decisions are not always made with full consensus. This sometimes leads to spirited disagreements that can make it hard to move forward and work to our full potential. Within six months of convention, all National and Regional officers and representatives must take both Solidarity Skills and Human Rights for Leaders training, regardless of if they have taken the training before. This will be financed, organized, and delivered by National office.

Solidarity Skills was created as a remedy to the infighting becoming more prominent at every level within CUPW. This valuable material is only effective to the extent that members at all levels actually go through the training. Human Rights for Leaders is a vital introduction, or reminder, to how our organization should be more sensitive and inclusive of the needs and experiences of historically marginalized groups. Both teach and assert positive behavioral standards of how to better understand and constructively work with one another, regardless of our backgrounds. These courses should happen at the beginning of a new term so that everyone coming into their roles is introduced to a set of established behaviors that is expected of them and modeled for the rest of our membership.

When we talk about the power of solidarity, we are really talking about the quality of the relationships between our members at every level. If we are to be successful in our struggle against the forces aligned against us, we must look to systematically improve the quality of our relationships. Officers and representatives that feel more supported in their work, and better about their relations with their comrades are more likely to navigate difficult situations in a constructive manner, as well as foster the morale and solidarity needed to deliver successful national initiatives to revitalize our membership.

BUILDING INTERNAL CAPACITY

Our union is only as strong as our members are unified around a goal and organized to achieve that goal. This is much easier said than done. Unifying our members requires the sustained resourcing, recruiting, and training of activists to organize our workfloors. To build adequate capacity to better enforce our rights and win fair collective agreements, we must have a plan and be deliberate in our efforts to carry it out. There have been many inspiring examples of different levels of CUPW mobilizing against the boss over the years; the *Building Worker Power (BWP)* campaign is the latest attempt by CUPW to coordinate a national strategy to mass organize our workfloors.

The first step of BWP is to meet our members where they are at, acknowledge their frustrations, and win back their trust through persistent union presence, advocacy of a collective strategy, and providing accessible opportunities to get involved. Regional Organizers (ROs) have been appointed to lay the groundwork of the campaign by visiting and presenting to as many workfloors as invited to by Locals.

OBJECTIVE 3: Sign up at least 15,000 members (~25% of our membership) to BWP

It is hard to ask anything of our members when we know that most of them are either not paying attention to what our union has to say or are unaware of what is being said. Our ROs follow every workfloor meeting they lead with one-on-one organizing conversations asking members about their experiences and if they want to support the campaign. By directly signing up at least 15,000 campaign supporters by October 2023 we will also identify members to help us further build our capacity going into negotiations. For reference, come convention, we should be close to signing up 7,500. We need Regions and Locals to take a more active hand by helping ROs get to every Local and visit every workfloor.

OBJECTIVE 4: Recruit and train at least 200 workfloor captains (WCs)

Our ROs are being tasked with the most difficult work of the campaign by going to workfloors that are not yet receptive to the message of the union. The goal of this initial contact is to find organic leaders in each facility who are supporters of the campaign and recruit them as WCs, to help win over more of their co-workers to the cause. The ROs are deployed to share the skills necessary to build secondary leadership at the Local level, but the WCs are essential to maintain the work of the campaign and keep our operations connected. Before we can move on to effectively escalate mass actions, we will need at least 200 WCs identified, approved, and trained by the Locals, to help coordinate those actions. This target can be achieved in tandem with the October 2023 outreach goal, but only with full buy-on from the Locals.

OBJECTIVE 5: First structure test - Mass petition with 75% participation

Effective organizers do not over-promise and do not take on fights they do not have a good chance of winning. By mapping our Locals via visits and recruiting WCs, we establish a foundation by which we can conduct periodic tests of our capacity to coordinate and fight back. We run these tests so that when we pick a real fight, we do so knowing exactly how strong we are and how far we are capable of going. Once we are sure to have a big enough base of members aware of BWP and willing to promote it, we will run the first structure test of our organizing capacity by asking members to sign a petition demanding no government interference in our upcoming round of collective bargaining.

There is no expectation this petition will succeed on its own; the point of it is to see how many members are paying attention to our efforts and are willing to respond to the smallest of asks. By launching a National petition like this and asking our ROs, Locals, and WCs to help collect signatures, we will get an accurate picture of how much solidarity has been built among our members. The goal is to launch the petition around the same time we enter negotiations (November 2023) and not deliver it to Canada Post Corporation (CPC) and the government until we hit our target of 75%. There is no wrong answer in a structure test: we either learn we've reached the threshold to effectively escalate our organizing efforts, or what specific Local, facilities, and shifts need more support in building their own capacity.

It took the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (CUPE-OSBCU) over a year of committing to an internal organizing campaign with considerably more resources than we've committed so far to position themselves to fight off the Ford government's back-to-work legislation and win a contract through collective bargaining. If we hope to accomplish something similar, our efforts need to focus on the process of perpetually building our power through deliberate escalation. Disciplined commitment to a plan, not grand proclamations and magical thinking, will win us the day.

The more members that know about BWP, the more members that will take organizing training courses; the more members that are armed with organizing skills, the more likely it is our members will be more effective collectively asserting their rights. By learning to challenge authority in these early days in accessible ways, we can take the next steps in strengthening our confidence to take on the necessary battles ahead to win our negotiation demands through free collective bargaining or facing down back-to-work legislation.

HOW BUILDING INTERNAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENS OTHER ASPECTS OF CUPW

Prioritizing the growth of our internal capacity does not mean neglecting other important functions of our organization; quite the opposite, it means better positioning ourselves to be more successful carrying out those vital functions:

1. Support for Locals

CUPW is at its strongest when our members believe in our struggle and are inspired to volunteer their involvement. To assist locals in increasing GMM attendance, to recruit new and increase the capacity of existing shop stewards in every facility, further grow solidarity on the workfloor and generate mass participation on our picket lines, we must continue to boost a union presence on our workfloors. As BWP helps will assist us to build an engagement momentum, a logical next step would be a mass shop steward recruitment campaign created in cooperation with the National Education department to help our Locals develop secondary leadership.

2. Public Facing Campaigns

Imagine if just 5% of the members of a Local were organized to canvass a targeted neighborhood over a weekend during a federal election to talk about how a public postal bank could provide lower interest financial services at a time of runaway inflation. Having the power to swing an election seat is an example of what a public facing campaign like Delivering Community Power (DCP) could do to create political leverage if we had the adequate membership buy-in. As more volunteers recruited by BWP show interest in the projects of the union like DCP, we will appoint a new team of Regional Community Organizers to help Locals and liaison with our allies in the community and labour movement to do this kind of public facing engagement in an effective and strategic way.

3. External Organizing & Gig Work

It is vital CUPW escalate its efforts to bring new members and new bargaining units into our Union. While we have seen successes, some of our efforts have not come to fruition. We know there are workers, both at Canada Post and in our other workplaces, that are not unionized and are continually being exploited. We must do a better job organizing these workers. CUPW's external organizing model relies on members who are appointed by their Regions as Worker Organizers (WOs) to conduct organizing campaigns. With greater internal capacity, more members will be inclined to volunteer for WO training and take on this important work. We will update our WO training courses and recruit WOs in each Region to scout, and pursue, new organizing targets. As our fellow workers in adjacent sectors lose ground due to not having union protections, it is important for us to step in to level the playing field. An injury to one is an injury to all.

4. Private Sector Bargaining Units (PSBUs)

Many of our members probably don't realize that CUPW represents more than just postal workers. Our PSBU members perform a wide variety of jobs both at Canada Post and with other employers: Emergency Communication Officers, Combined Urban Service Workers, Cleaners, Admin Assistants and many others. While we have a duty to organize the unorganized, that duty doesn't stop when they sign a membership card. We also have a responsibility to make sure these members are properly taken care of, that their full rights as CUPW members are maintained and their collective agreements with their employers are enforced. Greater internal capacity gives CUPW access to more activists willing to be WOs who can then be trained to help Regions maintain a level of service equal to that given to our RSMC and Urban members, and provide PSBU Locals support in servicing themselves.

5. Negotiations, Mandate Review & Tech Change

No matter the bargaining unit, our demands and tactics only have power to the extent that a critical mass of members are willing to back them up. CUPW will support Locals in helping educate members on the importance of being involved at every level of the bargaining process. For CUPW to continue to push for the rights and benefits we all need and to push back against governments and employers plotting to keep us down and divided, we need an engaged membership that truly understands the challenges and the need to succeed. Whether its effectively getting our issues heard in a government mandate review, or fighting back against CPC plans to make sweeping technological changes or implement systems like SSD, we need to win. Relying exclusively on grievances and legal challenges to stop these attacks is not a safe bet -- we need to use every resource at our disposal to fight back, especially our most valuable resource of all: the collective power of our membership.

NO STRUGGLE, NO VICTORY

CUPW is in the fight for its life. To survive CPC's loss of market share to competitors like Amazon we will have to muster mass public support to pressure the government to expand services to create alternative revenue and play our part in raising the standards of private sector gig and logistics workers. To do this, we must first have members willing to volunteer their time to canvass their communities to promote campaigns like Delivering Community Power or grind out drives to certify new bargaining units. We will have to rise to these enormous challenges, as well as automation and a likely mandate review, all the while fighting for free collective bargaining. Our ability to create an engaged and mobilized membership to meaningfully do any of this work is dependent on our capacity to inspire them to believe in our purpose as a union and accept our invitation to get involved.

The main objectives listed in this action plan were created specifically to inspire more of our members to get involved with our union. The targets of each objective are modest by design because the goal is to build from where we are at it, at our current skill-level, using the resources we have, in a way that can be sustained. This process of taking clear, measurable and attainable steps forward starts by reflecting honestly on our foundations: how we support our members in the work of the union, how our leadership could work better together, we model for our membership, and the strategy we use to help our members see themselves in our union.

Our targets over the next year harmonize perfectly with preparations for the upcoming round of negotiations for our two biggest bargaining units. By achieving these objectives, we can prove to ourselves what is possible when we approach seemingly overwhelming challenges in a methodical way. The incoming NEB will be re-evaluating our progress a year from now to adjust and assign new objectives as needed. We have the plan, the resources, and the motivation to work seriously with the time we have remaining before the next negotiation round; whether we succeed will depend directly on the willingness of every level of our union to support each other in getting there. If we unite, we can guarantee a better tomorrow.

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