

Emplois Égalité Justice  **Jobs Equality Justice**

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CANADIAN UNION OF POSTAL WORKERS

ACTION PLAN 2011 - 2015

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A. Building the Union

How the Union Operates

Objectives:

- To improve the day-to-day operational efficiencies of the union at all levels.
- Incorporate perspectives of human rights and equity within all activities and programs of the Union.
- To build a stronger, democratic, active, participatory membership and grassroots activist base.
- To increase membership participation in the union especially among women and people from equity seeking groups.
- To develop and support secondary leadership at all levels of the union.
- To increase our involvement in building a stronger coalition of labour, social justice, environment, students, farmers, seniors, first nations and community groups to present a better alternative to the right wing vision of a market driven society.
- To end violence, harassment, bullying and abusive behaviour at the workplace and within the union.
- To implement a program to resolve differences in a healthy and productive manner.
- To continue the development of our education program to reflect the challenges in the workplace, society and communities at home and globally.
- To continue our review of the union structure at all levels.
- To increase the participation of youth within the Union and within the labour movement.
- To increase the participation of retirees within the labour movement.

- To improve representation of members at consultation, arbitrations, worker's compensation, and other administrative tribunals.
- To implement changes that do not require constitutional changes after consultation with those involved and NEB approval.
- To continue CUPW's involvement with global union federations, international solidarity and worker-to-worker projects in other countries.

Actions:

The NEC/NEB will establish a process to implement and monitor the changes to the constitution.

The NEC/NEB will review and implement changes to policies and practices that do not require a constitutional change.

CUPW will work with our allies in the labour movement to build stronger, militant, supportive labour centrals at all levels.

CUPW will support public services, workers struggles in all sectors and the unionization of workers, especially those in precarious employment.

We will continue the development of the "Solidarity Skills" education program.

We will address occurrences of harassment and bullying wherever they occur.

We will promote the rights of women and members of equity seeking groups through our publications and education courses.

We will actively work in coalitions with our political and community allies to promote a positive workers' agenda and oppose the right wing push to reduce compensation, pensions and workers' rights.

CUPW's education program will continue to improve the delivery of programs in support of skills development, union history, mobilization and international solidarity.

We will increase the number and use of worker advocates.

CUPW will encourage retirees to join the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC) and similar organizations in Quebec or establish CUPW local chapters where possible.

CUPW will take an active role in decision making bodies of the Union Network International (UNI) and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) and continue the involvement of rank and file members in global forums and worker-to-worker projects.

Organizing and Private Sector Bargaining Units (PSBUs)

Objectives:

- To increase our membership and bargaining power by organizing in the postal sector.
- To continue organizing workers in companies related to Canada Post and in the broader courier and logistics sector.
- To dedicate more resources and strategic planning in faster and focused negotiations, especially for a first contract.
- To ensure that all levels and departments of the union take responsibility for this work.
- To integrate new members of the union into CUPW's education and other programs.
- To develop coordinated negotiations strategies with other unions in the same sector in Canada, Quebec and globally.

Actions:

CUPW will continue to utilize National Organizing Coordinators on external organizing campaigns.

Organizing and negotiations efforts will be supported by all levels and departments of the union.

CUPW will train and support negotiators for PSBU contract negotiations.

New locals will be established based on our organizing successes.

Executive members and new members will be offered training and access to our education programs.

The officer responsible will establish a dialogue with other unions in the postal sector to coordinate an industry approach to negotiations and a standard, coordinated negotiation strategy among similar CUPW bargaining units.

The Union will raise and promote issues related to workers in the postal sector and those in precarious employment

Stewards

Objectives:

- To build and strengthen our steward body.
- To ensure stewards are present in all our workplaces.
- To provide stewards with the proper skills to represent and mobilize members in all of our workplaces.
- To develop and support the social steward network in the union.

Actions:

CUPW will survey local executive members and shop stewards on their roles in the union and their views on improvements that enable them to carry out their responsibilities.

The national and regional offices of the union will work with locals to increase the number of stewards and ensure stewards are in all our workplaces.

The education department with the support of others will continue the skills development of the stewards body.

The National Executive Committee will work with the regional office representatives on the expansion of an effective social steward body.

Communications

Objectives:

- To ensure all members have access to the union's communications.
- To integrate new forms of communication into our network that respond to the members' communications systems.
- To review our publications and distribution methods.

Actions:

The Communications department will meet regularly to develop, plan and recommend programs and campaigns based on the needs of union and decisions of the NEC/NEB.

The communications department in conjunction with other departments will review the publications of the union and investigate alternative methods of delivery that are open to the union.

CUPW will continue the improvement to our website and investigate electronic communications with locals and members.

CUPW will ensure PSBU members receive regular communications on issues pertaining to their workplace.

B. Regaining the Right to Strike

Objective:

Regain the right to free collective bargaining with the right to strike to protect the rights and benefits postal workers have negotiated over the years.

In 1965 postal workers fought for and obtained the right to free collective bargaining for all federal sector workers. While this right has been under attack many times over the years, we currently face an unparalleled challenge to our right to free collective bargaining.

Today we face a majority Conservative government which has vowed to attack the working conditions, the right to collective bargaining, and the right to strike, of every federal public sector union.

In May 2011, the Conservative party achieved a majority government with less than 40 % support of the 61% voter turnout. Since then we have seen three occasions where back to work legislation, or the threat of it, has been used to attack the bargaining rights of workers. In each instance, once the government announced its intention to legislate, the employers adopted a hard line approach, refusing to negotiate except on their terms.

Every employer in the federal sector now understands that their refusal to negotiate will be rewarded with biased legislation designed to ensure that a third party arbitrator will have no choice but to side with the employer.

All of the benefits and rights that we have negotiated during the past 46 years will be placed at risk unless we can successfully regain the right to free collective bargaining with the right to strike. We have no option but to organize, mobilize and fight back.

Combined Strength Essential

More than any other union, CUPW knows the impact of the denial of collective bargaining rights, especially the right to strike. During our last four strikes, in 1987, 1991, 1997 and 2011 we have been legislated back to work despite the fact that in every instance we followed all of the steps and procedures laid out in the Canada Labour Code. In each occasion, after much thought and debate, the NEB decided to recommend to the membership to return to work. This was not because the laws were any more just than the legislation in 1978, which CUPW decided to defy. The difference is that the more recent legislation contains penalties for defiance which are designed to bankrupt any union which may choose to defy.

The Union is committed to challenging the constitutionality of the unjust legislation that has denied us of our most basic rights, the right to negotiate and to strike. However, despite the strength of our legal challenge, we know from experience not to rely on the courts for justice. Legal action can never be a substitute for mobilization and struggle.

In the current situation no one union can successfully defeat the combined power of the government, the police and the courts. The question which confronts CUPW, and the entire labour movement, is how we can organize to regain the

right to bargain and to strike. What are the necessary conditions that must exist in order for us to prevail?

Regaining our right to bargain will depend on the combined strength of the CUPW, the labour movement, our progressive allies, and our political allies.

The Labour Movement

CUPW is involved at all levels of the labour movement. Through our involvement in the federations of labour and the labour councils we participate in the central labour bodies which are key to labour's ability to fight effectively against reactionary laws and conservative governments. Only occasionally do we get the opportunity to glimpse the extraordinary potential power that labour has when it works together and with our allies. Examples of this power are the general strikes in support of the B.C. teachers, the Days of Action in Ontario, the Common Front bargaining and strike in Quebec and the coordinated strike actions which have occurred in Nova Scotia.

In order to fulfill its enormous potential as a movement and as the real opposition in our communities to the Harper government, labour centrals must be united, progressive, and tenacious and have leaders with vision and courage who are prepared to reach out to our communities.

Actions:

CUPW has a vital role in ensuring that all of the above conditions are met. Just as we requested and received the solidarity of the labour movement, organized by labour councils, federations of labour, and other unions, so too must we be prepared to support each and every struggle of our sister unions. It is through action and struggle that a strong united labour movement can be built so that no union will ever have to stand alone confronting the power of the government and the employers.

It is not enough for CUPW to be affiliated and pay dues to the labour councils and federations. We must participate and work to transform these organizations into effective agents of struggle against the repressive policies of employers and their agents such as the Harper government. We must also promote with our allies a better alternative to the current systems and structures we all face.

Our progressive Allies

Even the enormous power of the union movement cannot defeat conservative governments if labour is isolated from the community.

For many years CUPW has worked with progressive community allies to build a more just, egalitarian and progressive society.

Actions:

We have and we continue to work with students, anti-racism groups, seniors, environmentalists, farmers, the women's movements, anti-poverty groups, aboriginal organizations, pensioners, youth, community coalitions, social justice organizations, and organizations promoting human rights. On many occasions, such as during the CPC Strategic Review, during struggles opposing postal closures and during our strike actions we have relied on the support and solidarity of these organizations.

It is important to recognize that we depend on the strength of these organizations just as much as they depend on our support and solidarity.

No one can imagine a transformation of our society, to one led by pro-worker governments, without strong and vibrant community organizations.

Our task is not only to assist our allies in their struggles and help them build and strengthen their organizations. Our task is to work to build solidarity and integrate the struggles of them with the labour movement. This can only be an effective strategy through developing a common front with our allies in our communities.

Our Political Allies

Actions:

At the municipal, provincial and federal levels, we must continue to work closely with our progressive political allies and ensure that many more of them are elected to office.

Whether it be defending the exclusive privilege, fighting against the use of pesticides, or struggling for improved environmental protections, we are constantly involved in political struggles at all levels of government.

Although CUPW has never been affiliated to a political party we have been very active in provincial and federal politics usually through our support for the political action campaigns undertaken by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) or the Federations of Labour.

Recently we have experienced the importance that politics has on our futures. By narrowly winning a majority government with less than 40% of the popular vote, the Conservatives were able to attack our bargaining rights and right to strike. If only a few seats had been won by the opposition we would have had a minority government and the result of our bargaining would have undoubtedly been very different. Likewise, during the Strategic Review of Canada Post we saw the importance of the support of hundreds of municipal governments that supported our position against deregulation.

As never before, postal workers and CUPW must engage in the electoral political process. We simply do not have the luxury of sitting on the sidelines while the right wing and the employers actively work to elect their reactionary anti-union allies.

Action, Strategy and Determination

Actions:

Creating the conditions necessary for us to regain the right to bargain and to strike must be a central element in all of the union's activities. The task is huge. The struggle will be difficult. But we have no choice if we are to preserve our rights for ourselves and for the generations of postal workers to come.

C. Fighting for the Future of our Universal, Public Postal Service

Objectives:

- To preserve and expand universal public postal service and maintain the exclusive privilege.
- To radically reform or defeat unjust trade agreements which undermine public services such as the post office and develop alternatives to these agreements.
- To actively support the "Greening of the Public Postal Service".

CUPW supports a universal, public postal service. We want to keep our post office public so that its primary objective is service, not profit. We want it to continue to provide everyone, regardless of where they live, with an affordable means of communication and delivery.

As well, we believe the post office should support economic development and provide good jobs in communities across the country.

There are currently a variety of serious threats to universal, public postal service, both at home and abroad.

Some post offices around the world are being privatized or deregulated, which is undermining their ability to provide the public with good service and postal workers with good wages, benefits, working conditions and jobs.

Post offices everywhere face increased competition from both electronic communications and private sector companies. As a result, mail volumes and revenues have declined in recent years. This has led some countries to make cuts and even consider reducing the number of days they deliver in a week.

Canada Post's transaction or lettermail volumes declined by 11.6 per cent between 2006 and 2010. Overall volumes declined by 8.7 per cent during the same period (Canada Post segment of The Canada Post Group). Canada Post continues make profits in spite of the declining volumes, in part due to large productivity improvements.

The global financial crisis has depressed mail volumes. However, with an economic recovery, Canada Post volumes are likely to recover somewhat with direct mail rebounding and parcel volumes increasing as Internet purchasing gains more acceptance.

Universal public postal service is also threatened by aggressive campaigning on the part of corporate interests.

Multinational courier companies and international mailers have lobbied both nationally and internationally, to obtain postal reforms that would allow them to increase their share of the postal-courier market by undermining our public post office. Some have lobbied federal members of Parliament. Others have attempted to win postal reforms that have been rejected by the public through the backdoor of international trade agreements.

Unfortunately, international mailers recently succeeded in obtaining a desired reform from the Conservative government. In 2010, the federal government partially deregulated Canada Post by removing our post office's exclusive privilege to handle international letters. This move allows international mailers to legally compete with Canada Post for international letters. CUPW vigorously opposed this reform and managed to forestall the government's legislative

agenda in connection with international mail (Bills C-14, C-44 and C-9) for four years.

Universal public postal service is increasingly threatened by the actions and positions of our federal government and Canada Post.

In April 2008, the federal government launched the Canada Post Corporation Strategic Review (CPCSR). This review was instructed to rule out privatization, but not deregulation of Canada Post. CUPW representatives, members and allies successfully campaigned against postal deregulation during the strategic review (with the exception of deregulation of outbound international letters). But the debate over deregulation is definitely not over.

CUPW is concerned that the federal government could look at further deregulation when it reviews the Canadian Post Service Charter it introduced following the CPCSR. This review is set for 2013.

CUPW is also concerned by the shift in Canada Post's position on deregulation. The corporation went from supporting the exclusive privilege to handle letters during a 1996-96 review to favouring a phased in liberalization of the letter market during the 2008 strategic review.

The union believes that Canada Post is currently preparing for competition in a deregulated market with service cuts and a modernization plan that includes eliminating thousands of jobs.

While there is no "one solution" to winning the high-stake battle to preserve universal public postal service and jobs, there are a number of actions that are key to winning.

Review of Canadian Postal Service Charter in 2013

The Canadian Postal Services Charter, which was adopted in 2009 following the CPCSR, says "The Government will review the Canadian Postal Service Charter every five years after its adoption to assess the need to adapt the Charter to changing requirements. "

It is not clear whether the government will conduct a public review of the charter.

Actions:

The union needs to:

Ensure that there is a public component to the review of the Canadian Postal Service Charter.

Develop a campaign in connection with the review of the Charter that makes preserving and expanding universal public postal service and maintaining the exclusive privilege a major objective.

Build on the success of the union's campaign during the CPCS by adopting a similar campaign strategy:

1. Build strong membership support for the campaign objectives.
2. Build broad-based support for campaign objectives.
3. Publicize campaign issues and objectives through the media.
4. Reduce federal government's desire and ability to deregulate.
5. Improve and expand innovations in environmental improvements.

Work to maintain and improve the charter in the following ways:

1. The universal service obligation outlined in the charter should be maintained.
2. The moratorium needs to be clarified to ensure that post offices and outlets covered by the moratorium cannot be converted from public to private.
3. The consultation period for closures and service changes needs to be extended.
4. The exceptions to the moratorium need to go.
5. The list of post offices covered by the moratorium needs to be publicly posted as does the consultation process.

6. An independent Canada Post ombudsperson should report on Canada Post's performance in meeting Charter expectations, not Canada Post.

Continue to publicize CUPW vision of a universal public post service as outlined in "Our Vision of the Post Office" and the "Peoples Postal Declaration". This vision includes sharing the benefits of postal modernization with the public in the form of improved public postal service and jobs.

Work at the local, regional and national levels to get groups to sign on to the "Peoples Postal Declaration".

Work with our members and allies at the local, regional, national and international levels to increase our ability to fight for the future of universal public postal service at home and abroad.

Postal Innovations

As indicated above, there are challenges to postal volumes and revenues that need to be addressed so that Canada Post has the money it needs to provide everyone, no matter where they live, with a universal, affordable public postal service.

To date, Canada Post has responded to its challenges by closing post offices, removing street letterboxes and making other cuts. It has also embarked on a massive \$2 billion modernization program, which is designed to save \$250 million annually by eliminating thousands of jobs in communities across the country.

CUPW believes these cuts undermine our post office's greatest assets – its enormous, nationwide infrastructure and trained workforce. We want Canada Post to reconsider its focus on cutting and instead follow the example of other postal administrations around the world by expanding services and generating new revenue. Appointments to the Board of Directors of Canada Post should reflect individuals who are prepared to make a full commitment to a strong public post office.

The union believes the future of Canada Post lies in innovation and expansion.

Actions:

The union needs to:

Continue to work closely with Union Network International and other postal unions throughout the world to share information and experiences in connection with postal innovations.

Continue to research what other countries are doing in connection with postal innovations, especially postal banking.

Continue to press Canada Post to experiment with service expansion and job creation.

Unjust trade agreements

Corporate interests around the world are lobbying governments for trade agreements with provisions that promote greater commercialization, deregulation and privatization of postal services.

Here at home, the most significant agreement being negotiated at the moment is the Canada- European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). Many organizations believe that CETA is more of privatization and deregulation deal than a trade deal. CETA threatens many aspects of our lives, everything from the environment to public services, jobs, food, culture, water, telecommunications and postal service.

The postal and courier section of the draft CETA agreement sets up a system to facilitate competition for all postal and courier services liberalized under the agreement.

CUPW has asked Canada's chief negotiator, Steve Verheul, what postal services would be liberalized under the agreement and why the draft text includes licensing and regulatory bodies. Verhuel says he cannot comment because the draft agreement is confidential. Nevertheless, he says "Canada has and will continue to maintain its position with respect to preserving Canada Post's domestic monopoly for letter mail." While the union is somewhat assured by this statement, we are very concerned by the language in the draft agreement.

Trade negotiators were hoping to conclude an agreement by 2011, but are now aiming for 2012.

CUPW has been working with the Canadian Labour Congress and the Trade Justice Network (TJN), a coalition of groups and unions, to oppose this unjust trade agreement and demand that the government take a variety of measures to protect the public interest (See Open Declaration at <http://tradejustice.ca>).

Actions:

The union needs to:

Continue to work with the CLC/FTQ and the Trade Justice Network to radically improve or defeat CETA.

Educate CUPW members and the public about the threats posed by CETA and other unjust international trade agreements.

Work with our allies at the national and international levels to destabilize the political and corporate momentum behind unjust trade agreements and also work to develop democratic alternatives.

Increase our capacity to participate in campaigns against unjust trade agreements and campaigns for democratic alternatives to these agreements.

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