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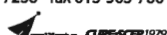
Jobs Equality Justice

La lutte continue • The struggle continues

Report of the National Executive Board



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

The following is the National Executive Board's report to the 2011 National Convention. This report contains relevant information that will give each delegate an overall view of the work that has been accomplished these past few years.

Delegates at conventions are tasked to create structures, adopt policies and elect leaders that will guide the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) for the coming term. The decisions we make during the next five days of Convention will impact CUPW members for many years to come. It is our responsibility to ensure that CUPW members have a stable future, buttressed by decent jobs and safe and healthy working conditions.

Our Convention provides the democratic forum that our union requires to report on its activities during the past term, take stock of our current situation and make the necessary decisions for planning the future.

Each convention takes place in a specific context that needs to be taken into account. This one is no exception. And we are in the thick of things. In mid-August, as this report is being written, the arbitration of negotiations for the urban unit has begun, we are finalizing the RSMC Program of Demands for ratification meetings in September, we are presenting arguments against the adverse effects of the Modern Post before Arbitrators Keller and Burkett and are actively preparing for National Convention. And all this is taking place in the context of a difficult economic recovery. It is plain to see, the last term has been a hectic one, with action as its main feature. We should be proud of it!

In the past few years, we have been able to consolidate our work as a whole and develop union strategies that reflect the union's orientation. It would be helpful at this point to recall what it is, as stated in the Preamble to our National Policies:

« In so doing, CUPW rejects all forms of trade unionism that fail to pose the basic division between the interests of workers and the interests of the employer. CUPW characterizes its orientation as a Union which, in an uncompromising fashion, pursues the class interests of its members, resisting all attempts by employers and governments to weaken or destroy the workers' movement. »

In the current political, economic and social context, we need to share and reaffirm CUPW's orientation. During this term, the foundation and conditions of the struggle for the coming years have been set, for both our Union and the labour movement, in the social, political and economic arenas, at home and abroad.

We have a vision of the future and we know what direction we want to take. This Convention will enable us to establish the conditions to get there.

This report sets out to cover six main aspects of Union activity, each with several related topics. The aim is to provide you with an overall view of union work over the past few years, to point out how we have responded to the various situations and to understand the strategies we have developed to protect our public and universal postal service. The National Executive Board report is divided into six sections:

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(A) HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2008-2011 TERM

Three and a half years is a long time in the life of a union, and a lot has happened. One way of remembering the events of the last term is to mark the milestones of our union’s life and examine why these were significant events. For ease of reading, we’ll review these events in chronological order to get a sense of the dynamics that shaped our union and its struggles during the last term.

–Modern Post/Postal Transformation

The Corporation’s two-billion dollar plus investment project has been the crux of the Union’s struggle since October 7, 2007, and it has continued to affect our struggle ever since. Modern Post, a moniker for postal transformation, transcends all other events that have unfolded over the past few years and will be part of workers’ lives for years to come. Consultation and negotiations have taken place over this time and continue to this day. We will take a closer look at this issue later in the report.

–Strategic Review: maintaining a public and universal postal service

At the start of this term, we had to respond quickly to a review of the postal service by the Harper government. We wasted no time in mobilizing members and alerting the public. Among other initiatives taken, hundreds of municipalities wrote letters supporting the maintenance of a public and universal postal system. The stakes were high: we had to stop deregulation – and we did.

As part of this campaign, we publicly reaffirmed our vision of a public and universal postal system, expressed in the 25 recommendations we submitted to the independent Strategic Review Advisory Panel. We showed CUPW members and the public that two visions of the postal service were at odds: Canada Post's, which is based on profits, and our own, which is predicated on maintaining decent jobs in our communities and improved service to the public. Our work throughout the term was based on this major difference between the employer's vision and our own.

This campaign also gave rise to a grievance concerning the right to wear buttons, a fundamental right to self-expression recognized by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Union filed a grievance and, in March 2010, the arbitrator sided with the Union. This is a victory we should savour.

–Settlement of the 2nd reopener of the RSMC Collective Agreement

Earlier in the term, we completed negotiations in the second reopener of the Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers (RSMC) collective agreement, before Arbitrator Bastien rendered his decision. We had gone back to the bargaining table a few days before, with a view to obtaining a negotiated settlement. There again, we were successful and able to negotiate improved working conditions for RSMCs.

–Strike at the Union of Postal Communications Employees (UPCE)

In October and November of 2008, UPCE members went on strike, not only to protect their purchasing power, but also to resist Canada Post's attempts to replace their sick leave plan with a short-term disability plan (STDP). We actively supported their struggle and they received wholehearted support from CUPW members across the country.

Unfortunately, they were forced to accept a contract that included the STDP. This was significant for us in two ways. First, it meant the employer was determined to attack its employees' acquired rights, even if it led to a strike. Second, it gave us an opportunity to lay the foundation for a relationship of solidarity with the UPCE/Public Service Alliance of Canada, one that has continued throughout this term and which led, among other things, to a joint campaign against the closure of Canada Post call centres, which we have been carrying on since the spring of 2010.

–Structure Review of the Union

At the 2008 National Convention, the Board received a mandate to review the Union's structure. In the fall of the same year, we set up a three-member "Independent Working Group." The group, comprised of Nycole Turmel, Beverly Burke and Peter Larson, followed through with their mandate producing an interim report to encourage further discussion and a final report submitted to the membership in March 2010. The structural review will be covered in a later section of this report.

–The anti-Harper coalition

On October 14, 2008, Harper was re-elected. Faced with a united opposition, Harper's minority government was forced to prorogue Parliament in early December to remain in power, with the Governor General's support. During that time, a vast coalition of opposition parties, unions and a great many community organizations came into being. CUPW was actively involved, seeing an opportunity to get rid of a neo-liberal, right wing government and replace it with a coalition that would protect the postal service.

Unfortunately, the government survived, thanks to the support of Liberals under Michael Ignatieff. We know what happened next. To us, this was a confirmation of the need to continue our involvement politically in the fight against the Harper government. This is what we have continued to do, whether in condemning its positions on Palestine, Colombia, the free trade deal with Europe and every antisocial initiative it has authored. We have established ties with opposition parties, keeping them abreast of our campaigns and meeting regularly with them to explain our viewpoint.

–The fight against Bills C-14, C-44 and C-9 (Budget)

The proroguing of Parliament in December 2008 killed Bill C-14 in the bud. This legislation was aimed at deregulating international lettermail and legalizing remailers. As we know, these companies had lobbied government to have international mail excluded from the definition of lettermail included in the *Canada Post Corporation Act*. We opposed this bill from the outset. We had asked for its withdrawal in our submission to the Independent Strategic Review Panel.

As soon as the House reconvened, the government resubmitted the legislation as Bill C-44. We resumed the fight and appeared before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Committee in November 2009. Once again, in December 2009, the bill died on the order paper when Parliament was once more prorogued in December 2009 – another victory.

In 2010, the Harper government took a different approach by sneaking the deregulation of international mail into Bill C-9, the federal government's budget bill. Bill C-9 was an "omnibus bill" that included measures it wanted to camouflage in a bill that would be adopted as a package. Once again, we appeared before the Standing Committee, but to no avail. None of the opposition parties wanted to directly oppose the government on the budget and risk provoking elections. On this point, we should call attention to the inertia demonstrated by Canada Post, which preferred letting go of more than 80 million dollars in revenues rather than directly confronting the Harper Government. Here was further evidence of collusion between the Corporation and the government.

–A global financial and economic crisis

The subprime mortgage situation in the US, the crash of the stock market and the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in the fall of 2008 led to a financial and economic crisis the effects of which are being felt today. Governments, instead of using their economic levers to promote a recovery, preferred paying out billions of dollars to bail out the banks and mortgaging the public for years to come.

This crisis had a two-fold impact on Canada Post. First, it exerted downward pressure on mail volumes and was used by the employer as a pretext to demand reduced labour costs. Second, it directly impacted the rate of return on investments in the postal workers' pension fund. This allowed the Corporation to publicly use the solvency deficit as propaganda in the urban unit negotiations.

This situation has directly affected Canada Post's strategy for the future. The Corporation decided to mirror the strategy of large corporations by directly attacking workers' wages, benefits and pension funds. And let's not forget the media coverage given to seven large Canadian corporations, including Canada Post, when they advocated the replacement of defined *benefit* pension plans with defined *contribution* plans.

As a result, we were forced as a union to spell out our vision of what a universal public postal service should be and stress the importance of expanding services to the public. The labour movement also responded politically by demanding increases to the Canada Pension Plan and the Quebec Pension Plan with a public campaign in which we were and still are involved.

In the fall of 2010, CUPW produced a discussion paper to provide a better understanding of mail service in the country. Entitled "The Future of Postal Services," this paper effectively summarizes our positions on mail service and expanding services into the banking sector.

–Gaza: "Operation Lead Cast"

On December 27, 2008, the Israeli army invaded the Gaza Strip, supposedly in retaliation for rocket fire from Hamas, the democratically elected government of Gaza since 2006. We have actively joined with others in condemning the Israeli occupation of Gaza. This followed the adoption, at national convention, of a resolution on the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign against the State of Israel. As we may remember, this military operation provoked widespread international outrage, due to the disproportionate response of the Israeli attack, the number of civilian victims among Palestinians, and the Israeli army's use of arms that are restricted or prohibited by international humanitarian law.

Since then, we have continued our work in support of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination by taking part in solidarity delegation visits to the Palestinian territories and by supporting the peace flotilla and other activities aimed at breaking Gaza's isolation. We also established a solidarity work project with the Palestinian union representing postal workers.

This work is part of what CUPW does to support peoples' struggles for the right to self-determination. It includes activities in support of Iranian workers and condemning the genocide of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

–Report of the CPC Strategic Review Advisory Panel

In April 2009, the independent Strategic Review Advisory Panel released its report on the future of Canada Post. Its first recommendation was that the Canada Post should retain its exclusive privilege over the delivery of letter mail. This was an enormous victory for the Union. However, we condemned the fact that the report did not provide adequate protection for the rural areas or against post office closures. The Harper Government followed up on the Advisory Panel's report by issuing the *Canadian Postal Service Charter* in September 2009.

During the period of the review, we witnessed the development of a subservient relationship between Canada Post and the Harper Government. We also saw the end of the price cap, as we had been demanding for several years, and the suspension of dividend payments. The federal government agreed to a five-year pricing plan to increase price of stamps and allowed Canada Post to borrow from the markets to finance the implementation of the Modern Post.

–Workfloor Access

In the Atlantic and Pacific Regions, the employer made attempts to prevent union officials from accessing the workplace. Again, arbitrators sided with the Union and the employer had to pay compensation, and reverse its ban of Union representatives.

–3rd reopener of the RSMC collective agreement and preparing to negotiate with the right to strike

In the spring and summer of 2009, we started preparing for the third reopener of the rural and suburban mail carrier's (RSMC) collective agreement. This involved going out to every local across the country to identify issues for negotiations. We developed a Program of Demands that members adopted and negotiations are continuing.

However, the employer's intransigence and refusal to negotiate, forced us to turn to interest arbitration for a second time. The parties were unable to agree on the selection of an arbitrator, so Minister of Labour, Lisa Raitt appointed Brian Keller on May 19, 2010. Since then, we have gone from arbitration to mediation, and back to arbitration. The parties' submissions should be completed by the end of this August, and the arbitrator should be in a position to draft his decision in the following weeks.

We are now getting ready to negotiate the RSMC collective agreement with the right to strike. The ratification vote will be held from August 22 to September 25, 2011, with the notice to bargain being served in early October.

–International Postal Conference

In June 2009, CUPW held an International Postal Conference on technological change and its impact on mail service. Looking at mail service implies having a global view of how it works. This is what this conference was designed to do. It attracted participants from ten countries around the world. We were able to learn that deregulation of mail service in Europe and international competition are forcing national postal administrations to find ways to make the most cost-effective use of their infrastructures while attempting to cope with a weak economic recovery.

This conference was an opportunity for us to strengthen ties with unions from other countries and to consolidate our cooperation with the Union Network International (UNI), with which CUPW is affiliated. This increased cooperation has yielded meaningful results at every meeting and union forum we have attended since. UNI has carried forward the idea of organizing a conference on a specific theme by organizing an Innovations Conference scheduled for September in Washington, D.C. CUPW will be attending. This privileged relationship with UNI has allowed us to strengthen our involvement in that organization and reinforce our viewpoint on the fight against deregulation of postal services throughout the world. Wherever we go, our positions are respected. After all, we practice what we preach. We view this as a benefit from our long-standing involvement in the international labour movement.

–Postponing the National Convention to October 2011

At its meeting in August 2009, the National Executive Board voted to postpone National Convention by six months so the event would not directly conflict with the negotiations process underway in both urban and RSMC bargaining units. This decision was confirmed at the National Presidents' Meeting held in September 2009. The members of the Independent Working Group on CUPW Structure attended this national meeting to present their interim report, entitled "What we heard: Issues and options for making the CUPW stronger and more efficient."

–Winnipeg: Negotiations Begin

On July 30, 2009, Canada Post gave us notice of technological change under paragraph 29.03 (b) of the collective agreement, detailing its plan to implement Modern Post in Manitoba. Consultation was held during the several weeks that followed.

As we all know, the building in Winnipeg of a new sortation plant with new technology was a test for us in terms of our struggle to eliminate the adverse effects associated with the implementation of new technology. This explains the Union's particular focus on the Winnipeg plant. Starting in November 2009, negotiations took place in that city, which involved the national level of the Union. It was an opportunity to respond to concrete health and safety issues with concrete solutions for postal worker health and safety.

In addition to challenging every aspect of the new equipment being implemented, the Union also analysed the new technology's impact on staffing, as well as changes directly affecting work schedules, job rotation and the transfer of mail service courier duties to motorized letter carriers. Many meetings were held and, in April 2010, the NEB held one of its meetings in Winnipeg to meet directly with members. The fine involvement of the Local Executive Committee and members of the Local deserves mention. We saw how they then went on to garner public support by focusing on the safety of workers and service to the public.

–Review of the Bargaining Units

On January 21, 2010, the Union filed an application for review of the bargaining units before the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB), with a view to merging the Urban Operations unit and the RSMC unit. There are many reasons for this application: the identical work being performed by the separate bargaining units; the now obsolete distinction between "rural" and "urban"; the disparities in the working conditions of workers in urban and rural areas; the modernization of Canada Post; the problems created by the current structure; the impact of Modern Post on all postal workers; the process used for nominating and electing health and safety representatives in all postal facilities; the need to form a united front against the employer's attacks and to protect our public, universal postal service.

In the following weeks, we made the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association (CPAA) a proposal to initiate discussions on merging our two unions, but to no avail. This was not the first time we had made this offer to CPAA.

–Preparing for Urban Unit Negotiations

The national negotiations process is set out in our National Constitution. It provides for a democratic process that unfolds over several months and involves all CUPW members. For this latest round of negotiations, the National Executive Board decided to suspend holding the area council meetings and instead launch the negotiations process at the regional presidents' meetings. These meetings were held in late January 2010. The discussion paper, entitled "Our Vision of the Postal Service Must Prevail," outlined the major issues involved. It was already clear at the time that this would be a pivotal round of negotiations, and that, given the technological changes underway, we would have to renegotiate both inside and outside working methods.

To explain the postal transformation and show how all workers would be directly affected, the union produced and sent to all members a short DVD video presentation entitled "A Modern Post Powered by People." Regional Conferences were held in April and the National Executive Board adopted the Program of Demands in August 2010.

–Centralization of Postal Operations

In addition to Modern Post, Canada Post launched a review of its national network in March 2010, with a view to "optimizing its operations". The review directly affected the Victoria, Kitchener, Moncton sortation centres. True to its orientation, the Union immediately responded to protect the jobs that were threatened in the community. We alerted public opinion to this issue and met with federal and provincial MPs. We explained the adverse effects of these changes. And we garnered considerable support.

National, regional and local union officers representing the members of the affected facilities took part in consultation and negotiations meetings to prevent job losses. Consultation and negotiations were held in the respective regions and with the local executive committees. Despite all our efforts, the centralization went ahead. We did however succeed in forcing the employer to sign memoranda of agreement protecting the acquired rights of the affected members.

–From Modern Post to Interest Arbitration

After months of weekly negotiations in Ottawa and holding meetings in Winnipeg, it became obvious that the implementation of Modern Post was resulting in violations of the collective agreement and disputes that could not be resolved without third party assistance. We advised Canada Post that the technological change it wanted to make and new equipment it wanted to install would have harmful effects on workers in Groups 1, 2 and 3 in three major areas: health and safety, work restructuring and job losses.

Further to clause 29.09 of the urban unit collective agreement, the Union presented Canada Post with a list of arbitrators. The parties agreed on the appointment of Arbitrator Brian Keller, who accepted the appointment. The first meeting between the parties was held the following day, on June 1, 2010, and arbitration has been underway ever since. We have now finished submitting our evidence on the adverse effects on workers in Group 1 and will soon be starting to present our case for Group 2 workers. However, there have been delays in arbitration, since we also attempted to negotiate these issues at the bargaining table.

-May 12, 2010: National Day of Action

The work plan adopted at the last convention contains the following:

“CUPW will develop a negotiations strategy for the 2011 and 2012 negotiations much earlier in the process than in the past, in part to deal with the changes to the Canada Labour Code and in part to increase the mobilization of the membership.”

The National Executive Board determined that national days of action are the best way to convey to members that they are all the target of the employer’s attacks. As we all know, CUPW has a lot of experience in organizing this kind of activity. We know that when members are informed, they get involved.

In June 2008, we organized a day of action during the 2nd reopener of the RSMC collective agreement to convince the employer to return to the bargaining table, which it did, thanks to the success of the actions undertaken that day. It only made sense to do the same thing during urban negotiations. The first of these days took place on May 12, 2010. We held numerous days of action all through negotiations. The local executives and members who ensured these days of action would become important moments of our union life deserve our appreciation for displaying so much creativity and for mobilizing the Union’s 54,000 members.

Again, this confirms the correctness of our orientation as an action-centered trade union. There’s nothing like “direct action” from the membership and there’s nothing like solidarity in action.

-Moya Greene’s Departure

The bulletin announcing Moya Greene’s departure stated the following:

“As we all know, CEOs come and go. They pop in to do their tour around the circus ring, and then they fly away!”

This is one more proof that we, the postal workers, are the real foundation holding the postal service together. This should never be forgotten! Who maintains the sustainability of the postal service? Who ensures mail delivery for every citizen in the country? Us! This is why our vision of a universal public post office must prevail.

Moya Greene is leaving! More than any other CEO before her, she personified the “business manager” who puts profits before everything else. A manager who didn’t understand the social responsibility of a public corporation like Canada Post. A manager who never accepted the fact that Canada Post’s workers are unionized and for the most part represented by CUPW.

But behind Moya Greene, there’s the establishment! She had the support of the Board of Directors and she surrounded herself with people who shared her vision. We must be realistic! She put in place an orientation and an apparatus that are still there! We won’t have to wait long to see how they behave without her.”

Reading this bulletin a year later, we clearly understand the apparatus put in place by Moya Greene is still there. The two CEOs who have replaced her so far (Stewart Bacon and Deepak Chopra) have pursued, each in his own way, the same approach based on profits, productivity and cuts to our working conditions.

-“Respect, Equality, and a Share of the Benefits of the Modern Post”

Those are the three principles on which we based our negotiations for the urban unit. It was important for us to clearly understand the issues of this round of bargaining and to get the employer to understand them also. Members understood very well that these negotiations would impact their working conditions for years to come. We only need to look to our history. During the first wave of technological changes, in the 1970s, we fought to have measures and contract provisions put in place to protect our working conditions as well as our health and safety. The collective agreement has protected us ever since. With the introduction of new equipment, it was inevitable we would have to negotiate new protections and new working conditions.

The Program of Demands, ratified by 96.5% of members who attended the ratification vote in September 2010, was a reflection of those concerns. After all the discussions and activities held during the previous months, members were ready to confront the employer.

On October 4, 2010, we sent notice to bargain to the employer. The first meeting took place on October 21. What happened afterwards will be covered in a separate section.

-November 22, 2010: Winnipeg has had enough!

The opening of the new plant in Winnipeg didn't exactly go as hoped by the employer. A lot of adjustments were needed. Very early on, it became evident that the plant's operations required more workers than expected. Moreover, the plant was quickly running out of space. This confirms the Union position from the very beginning, i.e. that Winnipeg should be treated as a "pilot-project". A position the employer has always rejected.

The problems plaguing the sorting centre were also bound to occur with sequencing and mail delivery. We've always maintained that the "multiple-bundle" delivery method is unsafe and creates numerous delivery problems. After the difficulties related to route restructures, the new delivery method was implemented in the first letter carrier depots in September 2010.

Our brothers and sisters stood fast as long as they possibly could. But the long hours, the new work methods and the arrogance of local management finally got the best of their determination. On November 22, they walked out. The local executive had tried to get local management to solve the problems. It had also informed the public of the delays in mail delivery, including through the delivery of symbolic "light bulbs" in the affected areas. The employer remained steadfast in its stubbornness.

Because of what happened in Winnipeg, all the members were able to clearly understand the adverse effects of the new work methods. Later, several locals organized campaigns to inform the local population. The situation in Winnipeg also highlighted the importance of this round of bargaining for the future of the postal service.

-In bargaining mode

Since January 2011, the Union has been in bargaining mode. Yes, the Union continues to carry out the work related to the various collective agreements and most files proceed as usual, but rural and urban negotiations have been the main concern for everyone.

In the rural negotiations, we've continued our discussions with the employer, and arbitrator Keller unsuccessfully attempted to mediate a settlement. We are now in the process of making our last submissions and we hope the arbitrator will render a decision before the expiration of the collective agreement at the end of the year.

As for urban negotiations, we followed all the steps required under the *Canada Labour Code*. We requested conciliation on January 21, and when the federal election was called, we strategically asked for an extension until May 3, the day after the election. Afterwards, the conciliator took on the role of mediator.

We must acknowledge the numerous activities organized everywhere in the country in conjunction with the national days of action, as well as the local initiatives. We need to recognize the creativity and the originality demonstrated by members everywhere in the country. There was a steady increase in activities, and momentum grew, involving all 54,000 members. We saw real solidarity in action.

-Strike vote in the urban unit: record participation

During the same period, we held a referendum to give the NEB a strike mandate as part of our strategy during negotiations. The vote took place from March 25 to April 17. The Union aimed to have a record number of members participate in the vote, and we succeeded! All over the country, attendance at the different local meetings surpassed the expectations of union officers. What a widespread and wonderful demonstration of democracy. This massive participation was proof that members understood the issues in this round of negotiations and that they were ready to fight until the end to protect their jobs and the universal public postal service. Members gave their union a strike mandate of 94.5%.

-Harper's majority government

We knew the election results would influence our negotiations. There's a world of a difference between a minority and a majority government. With a majority government, the influence of opposition parties is reduced to nil.

We also knew that a majority government would cement Canada Post's intransigence at the bargaining table. Consequently, the results from the May 2 election were very hard to swallow: 40% of the people who cast a vote elected a majority conservative government. The spectre of antidemocratic and anti-union measures reappeared, stronger than ever. A Harper majority government until October 19, 2015 – what a disaster!

However, we welcome the election of the New Democratic Party as the official opposition. There is no doubt that the labour movement and its allies will be the real official opposition for the duration of the conservatives' mandate. We'll need to take this into account when we establish our priorities for the coming years.

-An effective strike strategy, tailored to the situation

The goal of any round of bargaining is to sign a collective agreement that will protect our members' rights and wages, while making improvements that will allow them to face the future. This was the goal of the current round of negotiations. We did all we possibly could to try to fulfill this mandate. It was impossible, given the employer's staunch refusal to budge from its position. All it wanted to do was reduce its labour costs, slash our working conditions and impose unsafe work methods.

We were left with no other choice but to strike. Unanimously, the Board adopted a rotating strike strategy to put pressure on the employer while maintaining services to the public. When we served our 72-hour strike notice on May 30, we stressed the main issues: the new working methods, wages and benefits for new hires and the preservation of the current sick leave plan.

Another aspect of our strategy was to link the location of the strike to one of the bargaining issues. For instance, by starting the rotating strike in Winnipeg, we were able to easily tie in the new work methods and workplace health and safety. This gave us the ability to inform the public and gain support based on something concrete, always in relation with our principles for the negotiations and with our vision of the future of the postal service.

-A consistent message

We need to stress the importance of effectively preparing for negotiations. For this round, we started to prepare a long time in advance and spent months perfecting our messages. This allowed us to work harmoniously everywhere in the country. Every day, the message was the same, taken up and repeated by the media.

Everyone contributed to spreading our point of view, each and every day. This improved media coverage all over the country. We know that local and regional media prefer spokespersons who are close to the action, and they did exactly that.

-Communicating effectively with members

Throughout the urban negotiations, it was crucial for the Board to communicate efficiently with members and always be one step ahead of the employer. It's important to remember that after each round of negotiations, the Union is always criticized for not doing enough to inform the members. As we know, information must be instantaneous and complete.

Therefore, this time we increased the channels of communication, and added some along the way. In addition to usual bulletins sent to members and posted on our website, we made sure that all locals received the information through "fax broadcast" and encouraged members to sign up for CUPW's eDigest. As of last June, more than 10,000 people had signed up for this service. We should also mention the national president's video blog, which provides a weekly updates on negotiations. During the strike and the lockout, we also produced a bulletin called "Negotiations Alert" to inform people on strike locations. Press conferences were organized at suitable times during negotiations. Afterwards, the information quickly found its way to social media, personal networks, etc. Today, communication channels are numerous and information is being duplicated ad infinitum.

During these negotiations, our goal was to be a step ahead of the employer, and we put a process in place that allowed us to achieve this almost every time. It was a real success.

To meet its goal, the organization must function like a harmonious whole, like a well-oiled machine. For instance, the production of a bulletin for members during negotiations involves a whole series of steps:

- The Negotiations Committee discusses the theme of the bulletin.
- A member of the Committee is tasked with writing the bulletin.
- The content of the bulletin is shared with communication specialists.
- Comments and suggestions are made and shared.
- The bulletin is sent to translation.
- The bulletin is revised and approved by the Negotiations Committee.
- The bulletin is sent to the designated administrative assistants.
- The bulletin is printed and sent out to all locals, and posted on the website.

As you can see, it's a process that requires coordination and discipline. Since our goal is to be ahead of the employer, we must accomplish all this in a very short time. We succeeded, and we thank all the people who contributed to keep the members informed by providing them information before the employer got to them first.

-Involvement of the next generation of union leaders

More than 10,000 of our sisters and brothers had never been part of a strike or lockout before. They were able to see the employer's behaviour and its lack of respect for us as workers. They also saw that the only goal of the employer was to cut, cut, cut... But most of all, they experienced direct action, solidarity in action! Real experience can't be bought; it must be lived.

The strike/lockout was an opportunity for all members to get involved in the organization of picket lines, local activities and meetings with allies, and to deal with the media. Considering the challenges we'll face in the coming months, it is crucial that we train the next generation of activists and union leaders.

-Back-to-work legislation

As we stated so unequivocally in the bulletin we sent to members on June 15, the introduction of back-to-work legislation was unnecessary, unjust and counterproductive. We maintained that in reality, it wouldn't solve anything. The employer did all it could to obtain this legislation. Let's remember how it manipulated the figures in an attempt to show that the Corporation had lost money and that mail volumes had declined in the last few years. Even if the employer could rely on the support of some major media outlets already on the side of big corporations, we were able to demonstrate, at the local and regional levels, the falsehood of the employer's allegations. We think it's important to reproduce this bulletin, because it constitutes the foundation of our work plan for the coming years:

Today, the Conservative government of Stephen Harper served notice they intend to introduce back-to-work legislation, denying 48,000 postal workers our right to free collective bargaining.

This action of the government is an unnecessary, unjust and counterproductive act designed to support the attack on our rights, benefits and working conditions by Deepak Chopra and the rest of Canada Post management. It is part of a broader, world-wide attack on the rights of working people by the right-wing governments and the business community.

Unnecessary

There is absolutely no justification for the introduction of this special law. Throughout our 12 days of rotating strikes, we ensured that the public continued to receive a high level of postal service. It was Canada Post management that decided to escalate the impact of the dispute, by first reducing delivery to three days per week, and then moving to a national lockout, which resulted in a complete shutdown of service. As the owner of Canada Post, the government had the option of instructing CPC management to resume service to the public, and continue negotiations. Instead, the Harper government chose to attack postal workers.

Unjust

This action of the government is totally unjust for many reasons. It is a denial of the most fundamental right that working people possess; the ability to collectively negotiate terms and conditions of their employment with the right to strike over unresolved differences. The legislation is also an action taken against a union which has followed all of the legal requirements imposed by the law that governs collective bargaining.

Instead of respecting our rights, the government is intent on imposing a law which may permit an arbitrator to impose a whole new set of rules designed to reduce labour costs at the expense of our health and safety, and the well-being of ourselves and our families.

Counterproductive

CUPW will never give up the struggle for decent working conditions, financial security and justice, for ourselves and for future generations of postal workers. Any attempt to deny us our hard-fought contractual rights will be met with fierce and sustained opposition. Postal workers will never give up the struggle for justice for ourselves and others.

Keep strong and proud.

-What we gained from the strike/lockout

It's far from over! Since the law received Royal assent, we've moved our struggle to a new venue. We are now at the arbitration stage, that is at the legal stage of the urban negotiations. We are now fighting not only a legal battle, but also a political one. The struggle to maintain the right to strike is everyone's struggle. We are seeing a global attack against labour and human rights. Here are a few victories on which we can build to continue our struggle:

-The strike/lockout allowed us to highlight the fact that the postal service is an integral part of this country's economic infrastructure. We saw a complete turnaround on this issue during the 24 days of the strike and lockout. Initially, we were told that there was simply nothing to worry about. The media was trumpeting that the postal service was a thing of the past and it had been replaced by new information technologies. Little by little, as complaints started to be heard from different sectors of the economy, especially from small businesses, we received proof the post office is still necessary and it can't be crossed out of the list of available communication options. This is a good thing for us!

-We managed to build awareness about the issues of our negotiations: decent jobs, benefits that allow families to deal with the uncertainties of life and a pension fund that will keep its value over the years. These concerns are shared by the citizens of this country. We received a lot of support on this basis.

We also understood that our issues are the issues of the working class, of the labour movement and of all employees. We've found ourselves at the forefront of the fight to maintain the "middle class" in Canada and elsewhere in the world. This forces us to pursue the struggle. We will pursue it.

-We also realized that as long as our cause is just, we can and will find allies everywhere. We need to acknowledge the extraordinary support we received from the New Democratic Party (NDP) in the days preceding the enactment of the back-to-work legislation. Thanks to the NDP "filibustering" efforts, in the hope that the parties would resume negotiations, we saw that a well-orchestrated debate, with clearly stated issues, will resonate with the population. This is a political victory we must celebrate.

-We won't give up: the strength and determination of our members

Obviously, we still have a long way to go to obtain a new collective agreement, but we won't give up. In the last few months, our experience has taught us something about history: large capitalist employers, with the support of reactionary governments, will always try to implement cheap labour strategies. There's only one way to counter them, and that's by building worker unity and solidarity.

This is what we saw in last months all over the country.

-Going forward...

Why recall all these events? Looking at all the work the union has accomplished and understanding how all these activities are interconnected is important. We also need to recognize they required the different levels of the Union to work together as one for the protection of the universal public postal service and the preservation of decent jobs at Canada Post.

All these events occurred during the last mandate and generated a particular dynamic. Because we had a vision for the future, we were able to link the general and the specific nature of each of these situations, referring each time to our analysis of what was happening in the world and to our guiding principles. It also illustrates the diversity of issues on which we intervened during the last mandate.

It is important to understand that each of the Union's charge or counterattack involves effective organization and the involvement of the entire membership. We need to recognize that none of this would be possible without the determination and the involvement of our members. A labour union like CUPW is based on the voluntary participation and activism of everyone, at all levels of the organization. There might be some setbacks and problems at times, but the work is being done and there's no shortage of dedication. We stand up to the employer together.

(B) OUR OFFENSIVE: FIGHTING ON ALL FRONTS

Now that we have retraced the events that have marked the last mandate and pointed out the gains made and the lessons learned, we need to see how we dealt with them as a union. What are the means and the tools we used to respond to these events and to promote our vision of a universal public postal service?

The Union cannot carry out its work without a strong work plan that can adapt to the events and challenges that occur daily. Delegates to the 2008 National Convention adopted a Work Plan outlining what we needed to do. Throughout the term, the National Executive Board (NEB) adjusted the work plan as dictated by the events that occurred.

Early on, the members of the National Executive Board were adamant about the simple basic approach needed for our union work: WE HAD TO FIGHT ON ALL FRONTS. And we did just that. We know what we were up against: a head-on attack by the employer that requires a global response. This part of the report will explain the work we did together to get our point across and lead the struggle. Let's begin with the issue that took up most of the National Executive Board's attention: Modern Post, i.e. postal transformation.

MODERN POST/ POSTAL TRANSFORMATION

At the last convention, we had only been informed a few months earlier of Canada Post decision to invest more than two billions dollars into the implementation of new technology and new delivery methods. We also knew that the whole process would start in Winnipeg. Based on the Union's orientation, we also knew what our position would be. Namely, we would not oppose these changes, but would ensure that adverse effects were eliminated. Consultation began and we suggested that Winnipeg be used as a pilot project. This was consistent with the following objective we proposed in the Work Plan adopted at convention:

“Ensure that Canada Post lives up to its obligations under the urban operations contract to eliminate all adverse effects of technological change.”

Article 29 of the urban unit's collective agreement provides for consultation and negotiations to eliminate adverse effects. The Union had already created a Steering Committee and weekly consultation was taking place. Consultation covered work methods, health and safety, new equipment, etc. Everyone from the Union's grievance and staffing departments, including people from Appendix “AA”, were directly involved.

–Negotiations affecting all postal workers

It soon became obvious that no one would be spared the effects of postal transformation and that everyone working at Canada Post would be impacted sooner or later by the technological changes. In this context, the Union had to provide widespread information to members on the short-, medium- and long-terms effects of these changes. It did so by regularly issuing bulletins to members, producing a video presentation and developing a course to help locals inform and mobilize members.

–National Negotiations

Four members of the National Executive Board are responsible for consultation and an expanded committee meets every week to update the situation and prepare for the weekly meeting with the employer. The National President is in charge of coordinating the overall work. The National Union Representative assigned to consultation set up a data bank on all facets of the technological changes. The quantity of information being handled for national consultation is so time-consuming we have had to call upon additional resources.

In addition to the staff at the national level, members in the regional offices and affected locals were also involved in the national consultation process. The process lasted several months, until the employer provided us with the notice of technological change required under paragraph 29.03 (b) of the urban unit collective agreement regarding the implementation of changes in Winnipeg (July 2009). From then on, the negotiating process was in full swing and meetings then followed in Winnipeg, Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton and Halifax. Other sortation centres were affected in turn.

From the start, the National Executive Board insisted that discussions be held first at the national level. The national union's presence was also ensured when meetings were moved to different regions and locals. The members of the Steering Committee shared the work, taking on different parts of the country, and the national directors for the affected regions became responsible for a significant portion of the negotiations work. This approach was critical to ensuring consistent policy positions before the employer.

In this type of negotiations, the sharing and analysis of information is key to the process, and this was not always easy considering the rate at which the employer was issuing information. But overall, we succeeded.

–Union turns to interest arbitration

However, it was soon obvious that implementing these changes would not be a smooth or uneventful process. We realized, in the Canada Post Strategic Review, that the employer would make labour costs and flexibility a priority. With the start-up of new machinery in Winnipeg in the spring of 2010, we tried, among other things, to negotiate ergonomic studies and job rotation, but to no avail. We had no other choice but to turn to interest arbitration, as provided for in the urban unit collective agreement.

The parties chose Arbitrator Keller for this arbitration. Hearings began on June 1, 2010 and have continued ever since. The arbitrator is looking at all issues in dispute relating to the work groups. We started with Group 1-related issues. As expected, by last October, the implementation of Modern Post started overlapping urban unit negotiations. We wanted to negotiate all these changes directly at the bargaining table, which explains why we focused on negotiations. The hearings before Arbitrator Keller have just resumed.

–Mail Sequencing and Motorization

One the major impacts of the new technology is the change in work methods for mail delivery. The advent of mail sequencing and the motorization of a large portion of letter carrier routes are directly affecting delivery work. But the work method that has raised the most controversy among workers is the “multiple-bundle delivery method.”

Mail sequencing was phased in starting in the spring of 2010 and fully implemented by September of the same year. Since the Union considered this method to be unsafe, it asked the arbitrator for a “cease and desist” order. However, Arbitrator Dulude rejected the request. The grievance was referred on a priority basis to Arbitrator Burkett, who is now hearing the parties on both the safety of the multiple-bundle delivery method and Article 47 of the collective agreement.

In order to support its position, the Union commissioned an in-depth, independent ergonomic study on the impact of the “multiple-bundle” delivery method compared with the current method. The study was conducted in conjunction with sisters and brothers in Kitchener, London and Winnipeg.

–The Union has used every available means to protect members

We have now been discussing, consulting and negotiating on the issue of Modern Post for the past four years. This will be going on for longer still. We have used every possible means at our disposal to protect the health and safety of members. It is no easy task. The work goes on daily and involves every level of the Union. Our expertise is increasing and we are better able to identify the issues and impacts on members and respond more effectively.

–A single postal sector union

When we realized Modern Post would affect all workers at Canada Post, it became obvious that to properly respond, we needed to have the largest possible bargaining unit. That meant merging the urban and rural postal sectors. Since discussions with the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association (CPAA) had not yielded results in the past, the National Executive Board decided to apply to the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) for a review of the bargaining units. For us, this step is necessary for developing greater unity and solidarity and thereby protecting jobs in the community. The review process is still continuing before the CIRB.

DEFENDING MEMBERS

Since the urban unit collective agreement was signed in 2007, the Union has filed 36 national grievances over all types of issues, from isolated post allowances to Modern Post to union access to postal facilities. It is testimony to the employer’s little regard for both urban unit and RSMC collective agreements. In fact, more than 70,000 grievances have been filed since 2008 for both units combined.

–Rising Costs

Needless to say, as a result, arbitration costs have been rising. More than three (3) million dollars have been earmarked in the 2011-12 budget for defending the membership. Why the increase? For one thing, the employer has systematically been violating our collective agreements. These violations cannot go unchallenged. The costs keep rising. Let’s remember that more than half of elected union officials at the national and regional levels deal mainly with grievance resolution.

-Formal Arbitration Cases

The NEB has made several attempts at analyzing this situation to see how it could reduce arbitration costs, including those resulting from the cancellation of arbitration hearings. It has looked at having regional offices and locals share grievance arbitration work, pleading before administrative tribunals, and making better use of worker advocates. Our analysis reveals varying situations between regions, depending on those involved and the available skills.

The National Grievance Officer has submitted to the National Executive Board a recommendation to strengthen our network of local worker advocates, to help them deal with regular arbitration cases. This would free up regional union representatives to deal with formal arbitration cases, including discharge grievances. This shift in work toward local worker advocates will take some time. We have no choice but to move in that direction, especially given the backlog grievances filed under both the formal and regular arbitration procedures.

To facilitate this transfer of duties and expertise, regular arbitration courses were offered in all regions during the last term. We now need to implement a mechanism to oversee the work being done by worker advocates and by union representatives who take on formal arbitration duties. The National Executive Board will be paying special attention to this matter in the coming months.

-Workplace Health and Safety: A Major Union Concern

As has been said so often, the defence of our members is based on two main pillars: the collective agreement, and health and safety. In the last term, many of the issues we dealt with related to health and safety. These include the following:

-Modern Post:

All training methods and materials used to explain the new equipment were examined with a fine tooth comb by Union officials involved with Modern Post. This examination required investigations, studies and visits across the country to check the veracity of the employer's statements about training and equipment. The National Joint Health and Safety Committee (NJHSC) held discussions on the improvements suggested by the Union to the various equipment.

-Urban unit and RSMC unit work:

After seven years of stalling and challenges by the employer, we finally have a single health and safety committee for both certified units. Since 2004, the employer had refused to comply with the *Canada Labour Code* on this point. Following a complaint filed by the Union with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), the employer was forced to comply and agree to a single committee.

-Election of Workplace Health and Safety Representatives:

One of the Union's workplace health and safety responsibilities has to do with setting up local health and safety committees. We had a very hard time getting the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association to sign an agreement covering postal facilities with fewer than 20 employees. Nevertheless, all postal facilities now have health and safety representatives.

-Protecting Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers (RSMCs):

During the last term, the employer continuously resorted to ploys of all kinds to change RSMC working conditions. Whether it was changes to the cubic footage of vehicles or the Traffic Safety Assessment Tool (TSAT), the NEB did what it had to do to protect RSMCs, either by filing a grievance with the employer or a complaint to HRSDC. These cases are underway.

We are still facing problems with the employer's arbitrary approach to wages. That is why, in April 2010, Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers in St-Albert, Alberta walked out to condemn wage cuts following major changes to their routes. They received support from both their fellow postal workers and the public. Across the country, local executive committees are making representations against the employer's unilateral actions.

-Transition Committee

In 2004, the parties formed a Transition Committee to facilitate the integration of RSMCs as employees of Canada Post. The Committee has dealt with a great number of cases mainly concerning compensation issues. Wage issues require the work to be coordinated between various levels of the Union. Dealing with such issues also requires communication. All this led to its share of problems. To help clarify such situations, the Union developed a course that was offered in most regions. But this work needs strengthening. Progressively, and once a uniform hourly wage is negotiated, the responsibilities of this committee will be transferred to the local level.

In 2010, the employer made attempts to eliminate the Transition Committee on the pretext that its members were actively taking part in Union work at arbitration and consultation, and in training sessions. To maintain the Committee, the National Executive Board tasked the National President to negotiate a Memorandum of Agreement to retain the Committee. This was done.

DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING SOLIDARITY

CUPW has a simple guiding philosophy for its work in the labour movement: we need to get involved because our struggle is the struggle of all workers, and their struggles are our own. We are fighting together for a fairer and more equitable society. We should be proud of our union's philosophy, and we should spread and share it everywhere we go.

INVOLVEMENT IN LABOUR MOVEMENT AT HOME

If we are to preserve a universal public postal service, we absolutely need the labour movement. Solidarity is a give and take. In the past few years, we have continued our active involvement in the labour movement and this involvement has been recognized. We have shared our point of view in every forum we have attended. We maintain a vibrant relationship with the labour movement. A few examples:

-Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

We have an active connection with the CLC, as demonstrated by our support of the campaign for improvements to the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans. At the 2008 CLC Convention, we let delegates know about and obtained their support for CUPW's campaign against deregulation; at the 2011 CLC Convention, we did the same regarding our fight at the negotiating table to maintain a universal public postal service. Moreover, CUPW maintains a presence in all federations of labour and labour councils.

-Joint Campaigns and a Solidarity Pact

During this term, we organized joint activities with the PSAC/UPCE to prevent the closure of call centres and the National Philatelic Centre. The campaign is still on. As part of the urban unit round of negotiations, we developed a Solidarity Pact with the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada to support each other in our common struggles. We saw quite a number of UPCE members on our picket lines. The Pact serves as a concrete expression of our solidarity.

-During the strike and lockout

What can we say about the expressions of solidarity CUPW received from the labour movement during our negotiations and in June? We received more than a hundred letters of support. Solidarity was also expressed through the many demonstrations that were organized.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MOVEMENT: UNI and ITF

More and more, we recognize the importance of being involved in the international labour movement. We have been part of it for many years, and some have criticized us for it. But economic crises, privatization and deregulation are issues without borders. We maintain privileged relationships with several unions in the United States, England and elsewhere around the world. We actively participate in two international organizations: UNI (Union Network International) and the ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation).

Our involvement in both these organizations is necessary and beneficial. First, we share the same philosophies with regard to the struggle against deregulation and privatization. Second, we provide each other with mutual support. During this term, our work stressed the following points in our relationship with them:

–Stable Representation

The 2nd and 3rd National Vice-Presidents are the Unions' spokespeople in UNI and the ITF. Having consistent representatives in these organizations creates confidence and demonstrates how important we consider them to be, while at the same time allowing us to advance our own issues and positions.

–Exchange of Skills and Services

Whenever activities or conferences were held by these organizations, we encouraged the participation of other union members. In view of the ITF's organizing expertise, we have promoted the participation of CUPW members who want to further develop these skills. We do the same for UNI events. We are currently working with UNI and the National Association of Letter Carriers (the U.S. letter carriers' union) to organize a "Conference on Innovation."

–Preparing Future Leadership

When possible, in addition to sending spokespeople, we have promoted the participation of up and coming union leaders, allowing them to develop their skills and areas of expertise.

INVOLVEMENT IN COALITIONS

Our union works leads to our direct involvement and to our taking open and public positions on issues and topics that in turn extend this involvement. During the term, the National Executive Board extended its support to three major coalitions, i.e. the Trade Justice Network, the Green Economy Network and the Canadian Peace Alliance. Let's look at these three coalitions:

-Trade Justice Network

Historically, we have fought against free-trade agreements. When we learned the Harper government was initiating negotiations for a free trade deal with Europe, we opposed it. This agreement is even broader than NAFTA and threatens public services, including the postal service. Under the leadership of the Council of Canadians and other civil society organizations, we formed the Trade Justice Network.

CUPW signed the "Open Civic Society Declaration on a proposed Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union." We were actively involved with the Trade Justice Network in producing two information pieces, one entitled "Ten Reasons to Oppose CETA," and a comic book entitled "Top Ten Reasons why CETA is Bad for Canada." The Union widely distributed this information. The threat still exists. We will see what happens in the coming weeks. Since we need to be ready to react, we will be monitoring this issue very closely.

-Green Economy Network

Environmental protection is part of the CUPW philosophy. Some of our union demands, notably with respect to "last-mile delivery," deal with the issue of carbon footprint. For several years, we have been working on environmental issues with York University. But we have always been somewhat reluctant to deal with the issue of environmental protection because of how it relates to our work. It's the "post – paper – pollution dilemma". This is why, at the start of the term, we set out to look at the relationship between mail and environment. We produced an information piece that summarizes our concerns and demystifies the connection between mail and pollution. In this document, entitled "The Impact of Climate Change on Work and Employment in the Canadian Postal and Courier Sector", which we invite you to read, we identify the environmental objectives we want to pursue.

We also played an active role in two research projects with York University. For the first time, the union gave a course on climate change. Union members attended international conferences in Copenhagen, Brussels and Cochabamba. We are also working closely with the CLC and the Council of Canadians. This cooperation led to join the Green Economy Network, a pan-Canadian coalition of several civil society organizations.

We've also added our name to the list of organizations that are funding a multimedia educational project the Council of Canadians will be launching this fall, entitled, "Change the System, Not the Climate." This theme is a good fit with our union orientation. We know that unions will have to play a significant role in getting businesses to shift to a human scale economy and to create green jobs.

-Canadian Peace Alliance

The Union has also played an active part in activities organized by international organizations advocating peace and non-violence. In conjunction with the Canadian Peace Alliance, we were involved in a number of activities: peace and human rights demonstrations, fighting against security certificates and supporting peoples' struggles for the right to self-determination.

At this point, we should recall the Union's approach to our work for peace. The Union believes in a strategy of direct, non-violent action and the use of civil disobedience as a means for change. This philosophy has shown itself to be an effective one and has served us very well these past few years. It provides for clear and specific criteria on which we can base the stands we taken on issues that arise around us.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

A separate report about our international work has been prepared. We encourage you to read it. However, there are two aspects of the report we feel we should draw to your attention. The first deals with the issue of the delegations we send to Cuba or elsewhere to express our solidarity in person and encourage worker-to-worker exchanges. The National Executive Board decided to develop a process for selecting members of these delegations, organizing preparatory activities and asking them to submit a report on their activities upon their return. These reports are to be shared with others in the Union.

For example, the last two delegations sent to the May Day celebrations in Cuba were made up, in one case, of members from the regional offices, and the other, of young postal workers from various locals across the country. This approach serves the interests of the overall membership of the Union.

Second, the Board also decided to try, insofar as possible, funding concrete projects with workers in other countries. This initiative requires active cooperation between the parties involved. The model for this initiative is the "Frontlines Tour" of Columbia, which involved people from both countries and members from various unions. This is the model we will try pursuing in the future: joint multi-partner projects.

EXTERNAL ORGANIZING

One of the main tasks involved when talking about fighting on all fronts is organizing other workers in the postal sector. We've accomplished a lot in this area, as you will see in reading the report prepared on this subject. The NEB took a number of decisions regarding external organizing. The main decisions are as follows:

-Appointment of Four National Coordinators

In the spring of 2010, after reviewing our overall external organizing work, the NEB adopted a resolution for the appointment of members to coordinate external organizing activities. This spurred organizing activity across the country.

-End of the “Postal Franchise” Boycott

In June of 2010, the NEB asked the CLC to lift the boycott on “postal franchises,” which are, in effect, “private postal outlets.” We immediately undertook a campaign to organize postal outlets, which employ more than 8,000 workers across the country. Campaigns took place in Montreal, Quebec and Saskatoon.

We are now doing organizing nation-wide throughout the postal sector, which employs more than 100,000 workers. We are covering every facet of postal work: people who work in same-day delivery, Combined Urban Services, long haul transportation and service to the public. With the application for a review of the bargaining units underway, we can, in a way, say that “everything is on the table.” Sooner or later, Canada Post will have to recognize that it is the actual employer of all these workers. We also know that to increase our bargaining power, we need to increase our presence in the postal industry.

-Private Sector Bargaining Units

Along with organizing come negotiations. At this point, we want to recognize the work being done by our sisters and brothers involved in private-sector bargaining. Their contribution can sometimes be overlooked, especially during the periods of intensive negotiations that take place in the two large national bargaining units. The dozens of people who sit on these negotiating committees daily face private-sector employers who, in most cases, have Canada Post lawyers as advisors.

(C) CUPW UNION LIFE: INTENSE DEMOCRATIC ACTIVITY

When looking at the colossal amount of work we have accomplished during this term, we have to understand that this is possible only thanks to the commitment and activism of literally hundreds upon hundreds of Union members. That type of commitment and activism can only happen if they feel supported and encouraged. They also need to have the necessary tools to do the work and forums to express their opinions. This is what a democratic union must provide. In the following pages, we will try to show how the Union has concretely supported its members and activists.

ON-GOING, SUSTAINED COMMITMENT

Union work requires a sustained level of commitment from those who carry it out. A union cannot function without the many hours put in by activists. Learning about the collective agreements, preparing grievances, meeting with members, meeting with the employer, organizing activities, participating in training, attending labour council meetings and taking part in coalitions are all part and parcel of union work. This is the “invisible” side of union work.

But without this basic and on-going work, no union could exist. It is the foundation of our involvement. The determination needed to carry it out comes from commitment and from the conviction that the Union is there to enforce the rights of workers. That it can change things for the better. The NEB pays homage and warmly thanks all of our sisters and brothers who are there, day after day, doing this work.

It should also be pointed out that several of the programs initiated by the Union over the year have now matured and continue to fulfill the purposes for which they were negotiated with the employer or set up by the Union. The health and safety program and human rights training (Appendices “DD” and “HH” of the urban unit collective agreement), despite a few problems and necessary adjustments, have met their objectives. The same applies to the Child Care Program that we negotiated with the employer and which continues to provide precious support to our sisters and brothers who need it serving as a model for the union movement.

–Support for Local Executive Committees

We know everyone is swamped. We have more work than we know what to do with. Let’s face it: it will always be that way. The more we do, the more we discover what more is left to be done. We have to learn ways of managing requests and setting priorities. During the last term, to support its locals, the Union led a campaign to recruit more union stewards.

Special attention to union stewards was paid in the work plan adopted at the 2008 National Convention. Union stewards play an important role in the union. They provide a crucial link to the local executive committee. It is therefore important that we develop a reliable and effective union steward network.

During the term, we produced six posters aimed at getting members interested in the union steward experience. We also re-issued the union steward kit and offered regular courses to help them with their work.

The Union also tried to plan in advance for campaigns and days of action that marked the term. We made it a habit of providing locals the information they needed for these activities well in advance. From what we have seen, locals have almost always been able to get the required material in time to plan their involvement. We also gave special consideration to locals that are geographically widespread or have a large number of postal facilities to cover.

–Communications

Disseminating information throughout the union and among the membership is absolutely critical to union work. Communication helps us inform members about what they need to know about their rights, their grievances and negotiations that take place on their behalf. In addition to its regular publications, such as *Perspective*, *The Rose*, the *Stewards' Action Bulletin* and *Our Health, Our Safety*, the Union produced countless fact sheets, leaflets, information materials, brochures, pins, banners, posters and stickers.

All the while, we have attempted to beat the employer in reaching our members. One of the ways we've done this is by setting up a fax broadcast system so locals can quickly get bulletins and by encouraging all members to subscribe to "CUPW eDigest." So far, more than 10,000 have subscribed to this online service. We have also continued to optimize our website and launched the "National President's Blog," which provides union updates.

The Union is still caught between competing traditional information vehicles and popular new technologies like Facebook and Twitter, etc. We have been talking for years about reviewing our approach to information, and this need has become even clearer today.

During the term, the Union continued its collaboration with alternative media. We renewed our support to Rabble.ca and Straight Goods, and decided to support "*Presse-toi à gauche*," a Quebec-based news agency. Since mainstream media are controlled by the large corporations, we feel it is vital to support groups that provide free and democratic information.

In the area of communication, the NEB also discussed the purchase of a new videoconferencing system to replace a number of the Union's constitutionally-mandated meetings, including some meetings of the Board itself. Discussions on this continue.

What we do know is that information flow and modes of communication will continue to undergo major changes in the coming years and that we will have to adapt.

–Union Education

Education is the answer to a great many concerns in terms of supporting local executive members, union stewards and rank-and-file members. Our union education program is one of the best developed in the country. We provide courses on a comprehensive range of subjects, and these are led by union-trained facilitators. Our principle has not changed: workers should be the ones training workers.

During the last term, we used the same Union Education Program (UEP) as provided in previous years, but ran it twice. However, the education we provided always reflected the day-to-day activities and struggles we led. Let's look at three examples: The first was the "Fightback" course we developed to help locals dealing with implementation of new technology. The course was offered initially in Winnipeg, and subsequently used by many other locals.

The second was a conflict resolution course developed by our Education Department. We already had a lot of expertise in innovative facilitating techniques, but we needed to develop a course on this specific issue. The course was provided jointly by facilitators experienced in this area, working in tandem with facilitators from our own union. Entitled "Solidarity Skills: Confidence with Conflict," the course was piloted in Quebec and subsequently used in the rest of Canada.

The third was a course developed by the Education Department for anyone who wanted to play a specific role in the negotiating process. The "Strike Preparation Manual" was again updated and given in all regions, thus preparing hundreds of members for direct involvement in strike activities. Faced with imminent back-to-work legislation, we developed "Heads Held High," a short training module designed to help members be proud of their experience.

-National Committee Meetings

The five national committees met as provided for under the National Constitution. These committees allow sisters and brothers from the work floor to come together to discuss issues that directly affect them. The National Health and Safety Committee and the National Work Measurement Committee were involved in assessing the impact of new technologies on work methods.

The National Women's Committee and the National Human Rights Committee as well pursued their work during these past few years. In addition to the regular meetings, a majority of NHRC members had the opportunity to attend the CLC-sponsored "Rise UP for Your Rights" Conference held in December 2010. Some twenty of our sisters attended the World Women's Conference held in Ottawa) in early July 2011.

As for the National Board of Trustees, you will find its recommendations and suggestions in its report to Convention.

–Specific Areas of Involvement

We could relate many examples of how our union work or the work of our activists has made a difference in the workplace and in our communities. Here a just a few to show the extent of this work:

–Pension Fund and Retired Members

We all know that the economic crisis led to corporate attacks on pension funds, especially defined benefit plans. The CLC organized several demonstrations condemning these attacks. This provided CUPW with an opportunity to involve its retired members. With the support of some of these members, we wrote to all members who had retired since 2001, inviting some 13,000 of them to get involved in CLC's campaign to improve universal pension plans. Many of them took part in activities nation-wide.

As a result of this initiative, the Union now has a list of retired members to strengthen its connection with the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC).

–Postal Service and Aboriginal Communities

Our Union has a very clear position on Aboriginal rights. Our commitment was shown in helping the people of the Constance Lake First Nation keep their post office. In conjunction with the Hearst Local, we did the necessary lobbying to draw Canada Post's and the government's attention to the issue and forced them to respect the right of this First Nation to postal service.

Our members' willingness to do good for the benefit of all in their communities is spurred by their social conscience and sense of justice. These are just some of the many examples that do the Union proud.

(D) NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS

The Board makes a positive assessment of the work accomplished during this term. Since one of the Board's responsibilities is to prepare the Union for the future, it needs, along the way, to make necessary adjustments and recommendations. During the last term, the Board has regularly questioned itself about its work and the way it operates. Facing numerous challenges and a changing environment, Board members often had to ask themselves the following question: How do we deal with this? Their response sometimes involved adapting the structure to the new challenges associated with the evolution of the postal service, but it almost always entailed paying particular attention to the funding of the union's activities. First, let's look at the financial issue.

-A difficult financial situation

Any responsible organization must take care of its finances and review them constantly. This is what the Board has done on a regular basis during its term. However, we need to recognize that the number of people paying union dues has dropped by almost 1,000 between December 2009 and December 2010 due to the combined effect of the financial crisis and the postal transformation. This reduction, added to a more than 3% increase in the cost of living in the last year, has caused great pressure on our financial situation.

Until recently, with the 10% normally assigned to the Defence Fund, we had always managed to meet our financial obligations. Not anymore. The deficit for the 2010-2011 financial year will reach more than 1.8 million, and the last two annual budgets did not have provisions to deal with the cost of the meetings set out in our National Constitution. Even if we have a few millions in the Reserve Fund, our financial situation worsened during the last months. It is obvious we must reduce our expenses.

-A review of our union's structure is necessary

At the last convention, delegates adopted a resolution concerning the adaptation of our union structure based on our global situation. The resolution stated the following:

"The National Executive Board (NEB) will, within 6 months after the 2008 National Convention, appoint a small independent third party group to conduct a review of the union's structure, finances, meetings, procedures and services."

In the fall of 2008, the National Executive Board named the three people who formed the Independent Working Group on CUPW structure: Nycole Turmel, Beverly Burke and Peter Larson. These three individuals know CUPW and its orientation very well. The Board also appointed the National President as the contact person between the Working Group and the Board, with the objective of ensuring the independence of the whole process.

-Mandate of the Independent Working Group

The mandate of the Independent Working Group can be summed up as follows:

“The mandate of the third party group includes ensuring the viability of our union, reviewing the costs associated with the structure and maintaining the quality of services to be provided to the members.”

Members of the Working Group had the opportunity to meet members at all levels of the organization. Among other things, they attended local and regional meetings, and education seminars. They were also able to present and discuss their interim report at the National Presidents’ meeting in September 2009. This allowed them to refine their questions before conducting a last round of meetings in the fall of 2009. They were then able to publish their final report at the beginning of March 2010.

This report made us more aware of our situation and of the very close link between the life of the Union and the services provided to the members. The report focused on four main goals to make our organization more efficient: Better Union management; Strengthened democracy; Greater transparency; More efficiency. The report also contained a series of recommendations to be implemented by the Union.

-Board’s recommendations

The Board used the Working Group’s final report to prepare the discussion paper for the Area Councils in January 2011. In this document, the Board made six recommendations on which it had reach consensus. It is important to recall what these six recommendations were:

-Eliminate the Presidents’ meeting under section 5.31 of the National Constitution (\$600,000 once per term).

-Eliminate area councils (\$520,000 for each Area Council).

-Eliminate section 5.30 of the National Constitution and give the National Executive Board the ability to decide how to prepare demands for all bargaining units (\$520,000 for each Area Council, \$675,000 for Regional Conference).

-Provide for one national meeting per committee per year (approximately \$200,000).

-Encourage regions to find ways to combine services between them.

-Hold the Convention that follows the 2011 Convention in the spring of 2015 and, thereafter, hold conventions every four years (Convention cost is projected to be \$3.5 million, at a cost of \$1.17 million per year for a three-year term and \$875,000 per year for a four-year term).

For the most part, these recommendations were endorsed by the pre-convention Regional Conferences. We will now see what convention delegates will do with them. However, these propositions deal essentially with meetings set out in our National Constitution and not with the daily operations of our organization. Alone, they will not suffice to restore the Union's financial health. As we know, more than 60% of our expenses have to do with the day-to-day management of our work.

Following the recommendations of the Independent Working Group, the NEB didn't stay idle. For instance, in accordance with the Working Group's recommendations, it implemented an activity-based management system, it centralized some financial operations and it reached national agreements to reduce the cost of some activities, such as travel. This will not be enough.

Consequently, in the coming years, we will need to manage our finances on a day-to-day basis. We are not used to this kind of discipline, but if we fail to do so, we will quickly find ourselves in an unsustainable financial situation. It is a massive task that we must tackle collectively.

-“Not changing is not an option”

« Not changing is not an option. Up to you to choose whether to make your own changes or to have change forced upon your organization by outside forces beyond your control. »

This is the conclusion of the final report of the Independent Working Group on CUPW structure, which was given to the membership in March of last year. Many different arguments can be used to support the notion that change is necessary. These arguments are historical, structural, political, and financial in nature. The delegates to convention must take on a great responsibility: to put in place the conditions for a better future.

A NATIONAL BOARD WORKING FOR THE MEMBERSHIP

The National Executive Board is the governing body of the Union between Conventions. Consequently, the Board's decisions have an impact on every aspects of the Union's work. During this term, the Board met about 30 times, including the meeting of May and June 2011, which lasted in itself more than 30 days. During those meetings, the Board made the decisions that were required to ensure the progress of the Union's files. This is not an easy task. The decisions of the Board touch all aspects of the life of the Union. The Board's activities are very demanding, and each of its members has different experiences. Therefore, debates can be stormy at times, but the Sisters and Brothers of the Board have always respected each other's differences.

To support the work of the Board, we've tried as much as possible to follow the work plan adopted at the 2008 Convention, adapting it when necessary. During most Board meetings, we've reviewed our work plan and updated it. Moreover, we've tried to work based on consensus when debating sensitive and emotionally charged issues. When it was impossible to reach a consensus, we voted. We may have some disagreements on the positions to take, on the tactics or strategies to develop, but there's one thing for sure on which all Board members fully agree, and this is the Union's orientation.

To help us improve our operation, or at least to stimulate discussions on this issue, we used the service of an external consultant, D'Arcy Martin, who met the Board on several occasions and suggested different ways of doing things. As we all know, change doesn't come easily and takes time. Nonetheless, each Board member benefited from this initiative in his or her own way.

(E) THE CURRENT, CONFRONTATIONAL, SITUATION

Having reviewed the key events of the last term and examined how we've dealt with them, we now need to size up the current situation and plan for the future. From the very beginning of this term, we clearly realized what Canada Post's approach was going to be: no concessions, no compromise, confrontation and downward pressure on wages and benefits.

-The employer won't change

Barring a major turnaround, the employer will not change in the next years. In spite of a succession of CEOs at the top, the corporate line remains the same: profits above everything else. It doesn't look like Deepak Chopra will change this orientation. Although he only took over Canada Post on February 1, 2011, he was directly involved in negotiations and clearly embraced the strategy put in place by Moya Greene.

Management's goal is to maintain the corporation's profitability at the expense of workers. It will continue singing the same tune: *we must lower our costs*. As we've always said, Canada Post distances itself from those who have built the corporation's reputation and made it profitable for the last 16 years.

Canada Post chose its camp, and unfortunately it decided to side with the wealthy corporations that want to increase their profits by allying themselves with governments whose direction is based on authoritarianism and arbitrary conduct. We've been condemning this approach for a long time because it forces frontline managers to spend most of their time putting together disciplinary files against workers, instead of overseeing mail preparation and delivery. This is why we have put forward the principle of respect in the two national rounds of negotiations. As workers, we deserve respect and we will fight until the employer understands and starts doing things differently.

-An employer bent on vengeance and punishment

When postal operations were restored on June 27, the employer could have sought to implement an approach to management that was responsible and respectful of its workers. Instead, it opted for a punitive and vengeful approach. After the national lockout, postal workers had to deal with an enormous amount of accumulated mail. One would have expected management to take the steps required to ensure the quick resumption of mail delivery, but it chose instead to retaliate against postal workers and prevented them from providing services to the public.

Throughout the country, collective agreement provisions on overtime and extended hours for part-time workers were applied in an arbitrary fashion, contrary to the practice in place before the lockout. In many locations, management preferred to create divisions between employees instead of ensuring the delivery of quality postal services. By refusing to allocate sufficient resources to mail delivery, management violated the standards of the Canadian Postal Service Charter.

-A generalized attitude

The employer adopts the same conduct in all facets of its operations, be it in the workplace, during union-management meetings, at the bargaining table and in public forums. For instance, let's look at the negotiations for the rural bargaining unit. We know that in order to fulfill its obligations related to the financial cap, the employer must invest \$38 million by the end of this year. This amount could provide our 7,000 sisters and brothers from the rural bargaining unit with a wage increase and a retroactive payment. But no, the employer prefers to delay the process. It beats around the bush at the bargaining table, agrees to meditation, withdraws its global offer, brings back its previous offer, etc. That's what we call dragging out for the sake it!

We're facing the same conduct in talks concerning Appendix "T" of the urban collective agreement. Yet, the employer should be particularly interested in the expansion of services. It is, after all, a key element in ensuring the future of the post office. Service expansion is customer service.

Unfortunately, the employer does all it can to close corporate postal outlets and reduce accessibility to postal services.

-Profits at all costs!

Management's behaviour only confirms the impression we all have: Canada Post doesn't care about service. One could even say that it doesn't give a damn! The employer only thinks about profits. Each and every one of us could give daily examples of this behaviour.

As we said earlier, there are two competing visions of the postal service: Canada Post's vision, based on profits, and ours, based on serving the public. Canada Post could take another approach, one based on the social responsibility of a Crown Corporation.

Canada Post could set an example for a different type of recovery, predicated on good labour relations, the strength of its workforce and service expansion. This is what we've tried to get the employer to understand during the past years, but to no avail.

(F) CARRYING OUT THE STRUGGLE: OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A UNION

We know what we are up against for the coming years. Unless there is a drastic change, we will be facing daily confrontation with the employer over every issue. Our strategy should remain the same: continue fighting on all fronts and mobilizing the membership. For that, we need to do the following:

–Win back our right to negotiate with a right to strike

As of the time of writing this report, we have now begun arbitration with Canada Post for the urban unit. We need to do what it takes to keep our acquired rights and force the employer to negotiate a collective agreement. We have filed a complaint challenging the constitutionality of the back-to-work legislation, as well as a complaint before the International Labour Organization. We will work publicly with the labour movement to condemn the actions of the Harper government. This fight will be based on three principles: respect, equality and a share in the benefits of technological change.

–Fight for the equal rights of Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers (RSMCs)

From now until Convention, we need to complete the interest arbitration before Arbitrator Keller and prepare for negotiations with the right to strike. We must also work to ensure that all workers at Canada Post have the same working conditions. Doing this will require mobilizing the Union's 54,000 members and garnering public support by demonstrating the importance of maintaining jobs in the community. In that fight, our principles will be respect, equality and progress.

–Increase the Union's clout in the workplace

Our struggle over the past few months has engaged many of our sisters and brothers in the fight to improve working conditions on the work floor. The strike and lockout have provided a real learning experience to hundreds of members. We should continue to be ever more present on the work floor to enforce our rights and the collective agreement, and to ensure our health and safety. The Board will have to continue providing concrete support to union activists by making sure they have the tools they need. We also need to increase member participation in the union stewards' network.

-Increase member involvement in the democratic life of the Union

Getting involved on the work floor and showing that we care about our members will go a long way to increase participation in union life. The Union is as strong as its members. It is also a school of life that helps us understand what is happening around us and in the rest of the world. But it needs to become more inclusive and spur the involvement of members from every equity-seeking group: Aboriginal workers, people of colour, LGBT, differently-abled workers, women and youth.

–A Single Union at Canada Post

We have filed an application for a review of the bargaining units to increase our collective strength and thus protect our gains and our public postal service. We should continue to organize joint activities with other unions, as we are now doing with the PSAC/UPCE, and reach out to all core postal workers and convince them that being united in orientation, strategy and action is in the interest of everyone.

–Preserve public postal service by maintaining the exclusive privilege over lettermail delivery

We have been successful for several years now in preventing the privatization and deregulation of our universal, public postal service. This fight is even more vital today. Large private-sector corporations are keen on increasing their share of the postal industry. The struggle against the Canada-Europe free trade agreement is taking on major significance in these times of globalization. The corporate world will do everything it can to maintain and increase its profit margins. We will need to organize a response.

–Increase union membership density in the postal sector

Consistent with its social and political responsibilities, the Union must continue organizing non-organized workers to counter downward pressures on wages and benefits. Together with our political campaigns for universal social programs, this is the most effective way of protecting workers in the postal sector. The higher the density of unionized workers in the postal sector, the greater our collective strength will be.

–Preserve decent jobs at Canada Post and in all sectors of the economy

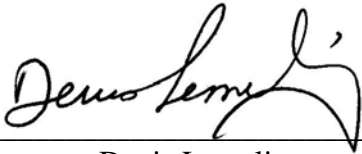
Canada Post's strategy has been to cut labour costs. We have to counter this attack by securing the greatest degree of support from our members, the labour movement and the general public. In the coming years, the labour movement will be the real opposition to the Harper government. We will need to form a broad, united front to maintain decent jobs. CUPW has to be at the forefront of this movement.

In summary, our fight must take place on all these fronts. We are not alone. Everywhere across the country, workers know they will get nothing from the Harper government or from large corporations. The struggle going on is between capital and labour. We must fight against a globalized, deregulated and privatized world with one, unified voice.

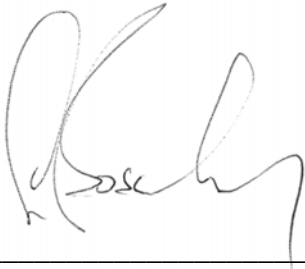
Let us say it again:

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES.

In Solidarity,



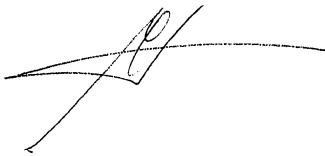
Denis Lemelin
National President



Gayle Bossenberry
1st National Vice-President



George Kuehnbaum
National Secretary-Treasurer



Philippe Arbour
National Grievance Officer



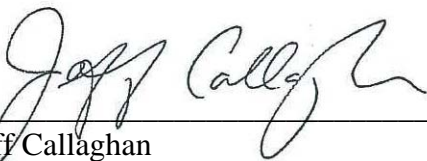
Lynn Bue
2nd National Vice-President



George Floresco
3rd National Vice-President



Donald Lafleur
4th National Vice-President



Jeff Callaghan
National Director
Atlantic Region



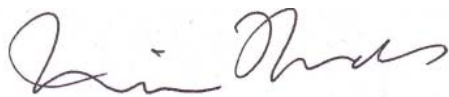
Christian Martel
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Irwin Nanda
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Metro-Toronto Region



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