

# UNION YES PERSPECTIVE

Volume 41 Number 2

Canadian Union of Postal Workers

May 2013

## Campaigns for our future

Our union must be an active and strong force in shaping the direction of the postal service and the political context in which we work. This publication contains an overview of the work we need to do on important issues like the attack on the Rand formula, Postal Transformation, the Canadian Postal Service Charter, service

expansion and reduction at Canada Post and the federal election. These inter-related issues affect our jobs, our communities and the public postal service. We need to work toward a future where our rights are respected, workers are treated with dignity and respect, and public services are valued and strengthened. We encourage every member to get involved in these campaigns.

## The struggle of our time

Our right to strike has been attacked. Free collective bargaining has been disrupted. The Harper Conservatives Bill C-377 is a legislative step in the political campaign against union financial security. The aim of these measures is to weaken unions, to silence government critics, and to push down the standard of living for workers.

The next attack will likely be on the Rand formula. The Rand formula is the provision that requires all employees covered by a collective agreement to pay union dues, even if they are not members of the union. The Rand formula helps ensure that things are fair. Union membership is not mandatory, but everyone must contribute to the collective benefit of the whole.

Union financial security is necessary so that unions can provide a balance to the power and capital of corporations. Many non-union workers have also benefited from major gains achieved by unions including weekends, health and safety, hours of work, good wages, pensions, benefits, job security, parental leave, and more.

The Harper government and its think-tank backers would have you believe that dues should be spent only on core labour activities and that unions are not financially accountable. They ignore Justice Ivan Rand's



argument that unions operate within a larger socio-economic and political context. Unions often have to challenge governments in the struggle to achieve workers' rights, and help shape the social conditions for fair and free bargaining. CUPW also works internationally with other postal unions to help better understand the global postal industry. In addition, all of our finances are already subject to strict and detailed verification measures outlined in CUPW's democratic constitution. We publish national reports in this very newspaper.

In many U.S. states, similar legislation has been called "right-to-work." Proponents of such laws claim that they will enable better competition, but these laws have nothing to do with worker rights or job guarantees. Instead, people work for less pay under worse working conditions.

These laws also legitimize the unethical practice of dues evasion while legally requiring unions to bear the cost of representing non-members.

CUPW is participating in the member-to-member campaign with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), and we need to hear from you. We need you to get involved and reach out to your families, friends and communities to have conversations, to share the gains we have made as union members, and to find out how unions can better advocate for the interests of all workers.

It is time to rebuild a sustained, unified social movement aimed at electing worker-friendly governments and raising the standard of living for everyone.

## Challenging Postal Transformation:

# A long and frustrating process

Much time has passed since 2008 when CUPW proposed that Canada Post use Winnipeg as a pilot project for the implementation of Postal Transformation. The Union argued that a slow and careful introduction of the new technology and work methods was necessary so that the Union and the Employer could identify and resolve problems before the program was rolled out on a national basis.

### Many adverse effects

Unfortunately Canada Post (CPC) refused to heed the union's advice and postal workers in every region have been experiencing the adverse effects of Postal Transformation including:

- Intensification of work
- Reduction of jobs
- More injuries
- Less accommodation opportunities
- Greater stress, family and child care problems
- Less rotation of duties
- More delivery in the dark
- More involuntary overtime
- Unsafe and uncomfortable work methods for letter carriers

Continued on page 4

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40064660  
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO  
CANADIAN UNION OF POSTAL WORKERS  
377 BANK STREET  
OTTAWA ON K2P 1Y3





# A plan to defend our rights

Nearly 320 sisters and brothers from across the country gathered in Toronto from April 20 to 22, 2013 to discuss the implementation of the collective agreements, as well as the Action Plan for the upcoming months. This meeting was the only opportunity during this term for the national and regional leadership to meet with local presidents. This successful meeting enabled us to develop the needed strategy to protect the universal and public postal service.

In this issue of *Perspective*, you will find the key points of our action plan. Every member should become familiar with this plan, as it concerns us all. Our jobs, our working conditions and our future are at stake.

## Common understanding of the collective agreements

We discussed the collective agreements to gain a common understanding of the changes that were made. This will ensure consistent application and will enable us to speak with one voice. For example, the presentation on the Short-Term Disability Plan (STDP) gave everyone responsible for dealing with STDP issues the opportunity to fully understand the appeals' process outlined in the collective agreements. Work on this and other changes took up nearly the full first two days of the meeting. We are ready to face the employer using the new agreement.

## We need to fight on all fronts

We spent the remainder of the meeting debating the Action Plan. Adopted at the 2011 Convention, the plan addresses the need to regain our right to free collective bargaining with the right to strike. To do so, we have no other choice but to fight on all fronts: labour, economic, social and political.

This means we will be fighting campaigns on key issues. The review of the *Canadian Postal Service Charter*, the closure of corporate retail

outlets and the need to eliminate the adverse effects of Postal Transformation. We will also participate in the Canadian Labour Congress campaign to protect union rights and social gains. We will continue to unionize workers in the postal and courier industry. We will work together with coalitions that fight to improve the living conditions of citizens, including child care groups. As well, we will get actively involved in the campaign to defeat the Conservatives in 2015.

## Each and every one of us has a role to play

This is an ambitious, but invigorating action plan. We must be ready to face the challenge, and we are. Each and every one of us has a role to play.

Sisters, Brothers, your union needs you. We are 52,000 strong and, with unity and solidarity, we can protect the public postal service and build a fairer and more equitable society.

## The struggle continues.



In Solidarity,

*Denis Lemelin*

**Denis Lemelin  
National President**

**TELL CANADA  
POST WHAT  
DIRECTION YOU  
WANT THEM TO TAKE**

Go to **"THE FUTURE OF CANADA POST"**  
at [canadapost.ca](http://canadapost.ca) or

send to **THE FUTURE OF CANADA POST**,  
2701 Riverside Dr. Suite N0800, Ottawa ON K1S 0B1

## CUPW PERSPECTIVE

Published in English and French by  
the Canadian Union of Postal Workers,  
377 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1Y3  
Tel: (613) 236-7238  
Fax: (613) 563-7861  
[www.cupw-sttp.org](http://www.cupw-sttp.org)

Letters to the editor are welcome.

Please e-mail your feedback to: [feedback@cupw-sttp.org](mailto:feedback@cupw-sttp.org)

**Editor:** G. Floresco

**Production and translation:**

A. Boulet, C. Drouin, G. Laflamme,  
B. Luijkenaar, M. Parrot, M. Prévost

### Associate editors:

P. Arbour, G. Bossenberry, C. Foreman,  
G. Kuehnbaum, D. Lafleur, D. Lemelin

### Contributors:

G. Bickerton, J. Gilles, J. Kass,  
K. Matthews, S. Ryan, K. Steinhoff

### Affiliations:

- Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM)
- Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)
- Union Network International (UNI)
- International Transport Workers Federation (ITF)



**cupw•sttp**

CUPE-SCFP 1979



## LETTERS POLICY

CUPW *Perspective* welcomes letters to the editor. We will print any letters from a CUPW member provided it:

- is 400 words or less. Union members may submit longer items for consideration as commentary pieces.
- Does not violate CUPW policy opposing discrimination and harassment against women, people of colour, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender individuals, people with different abilities, and/or CUPW policies and principles.
- is typed or written neatly.
- includes the author's name, address, local and a phone number where they can be reached if there are problems.

*Perspective* will withhold the author's name if necessary. Otherwise, the author's name and local will appear.

*Perspective* will contact authors if there are problems with their letters.

We accept letters by mail, fax and electronic mail.



# Review of Canadian Postal Service Charter

The federal government will soon look at how it handles public postal service with a review of the Canadian Postal Service Charter. The Charter spells out the government's expectations for universal service, service standards, the moratorium on post office closures in rural and small communities, and more. It also requires a reassessment of the Charter every five years. Therefore, a review could start on or be completed by September 12, 2014.

The upcoming review is important because the government could reduce our post office's obligation to provide service, or even lay the groundwork for privatizing or deregulating Canada Post. It could also set the stage for improvements.

CUPW has a plan for any reassessment of the Charter.

One of the main objectives of our plan is to get a public review. If the reconsideration of the Charter is held behind closed doors, it may be difficult to influence the results.

The union has two additional objectives. We want to maintain and improve universal, public postal service and improve the Charter by:

- Ensuring that the moratorium on post office closures in small and rural communities keeps these post offices public;
- Eliminating the exceptions to the moratorium;
- Extending the consultation process over possible closures and making the process and moratorium more transparent;



- Establishing an independent Canada Post ombudsperson to report on Canada Post's performance in meeting Charter expectations; and
- Ensuring the government consults with the public and other stakeholders to develop a reasonable, uniform and democratic process for making changes to the postal and delivery network .

To succeed, the union will need to engage the public, the media, allies, municipalities, organizations and Members of Parliament. We will need the support of members and the involvement of all levels of the union.

A few highlights of the plan include:

At the local level, we will demand a public review through postcards that locals will distribute to members in the weeks to come.

At the local and national level, we will contact labour and allies about providing input to the review and we will also meet with Members of Parliament.

At the national level, we have been requesting information about the review from Steven Fletcher, Minister of State for Transport, and through other means.

If the government refuses to do so, we will conduct our own public review of the Charter.

In the months to come, the union will produce materials demonstrating that there is a need to improve the Charter and maintain universal, public postal service in our country.

## Service reduction and expansion at Canada Post

**Canada Post can choose to face the challenges of declining lettermail volumes and profits through service expansion, cutting costs or raising rates. Through service expansion, Canada Post could leverage its nationwide retail and delivery network to provide new revenue generating services. Other post offices around the world are expanding into areas such as postal banking, which strengthens the retail network, creates jobs and provides additional revenue. Canada Post could improve its financial situation and its ability to provide good jobs with decent pay and benefits through strategic service expansion.**

Instead Canada Post has responded to its situation by closing post offices, introducing a smaller retail model, removing street letter-boxes and making other cuts. At the same time, Canada Post has been expanding the number of private outlets, also known as franchises, often in direct competition with corporate outlets. Since November 2011, the union has received 32 notices of post office closures and 26 post offices have shut down. This is the largest number of closures we have seen since the eighties and nineties. Service reduction and the opening of franchises close to corporate outlets will continue to result in job losses for CUPW members and reduced service for the public.

### Objectives

- Stop post office closures;
- Stop unnecessary downsizing of post offices;
- Stop opening private outlets that threaten corporate outlets;
- Strengthen the provisions protecting public postal services in the Charter review;
- Begin a public debate on service expansion at Canada Post;
- Compel Canada Post to implement a postal banking strategy.

### Strategy

- Build strong member and public support;
- Engage Members of Parliament (MPs) and local councilors and municipalities;
- Get as many local and national allies as possible signing onto the campaign;
- Launch pre-emptive campaigns against closures and downsizing;

- Support local and community fight-back campaigns; and
- Publicize the campaign issues through various media.

### Plan against service reduction

- Research issues;
- Produce fact sheets, bulletins, articles and flyers for members and the public;
- Encourage locals to use post offices at risk or private outlet kit;
- Ensure local and community representatives meet with MPs and municipal councilors;
- Attempt to get election commitments from political parties to stop closures and reductions;
- Ask allies, the public, community groups, municipal representatives to pass resolutions, sign letters and/or sign petitions; and
- Issue media releases;

### Plan for service expansion

- Produce bulletins, fact sheets and presentations on service expansion;
- Produce research report on postal banking worldwide and feasibility of postal banking in Canada;
- Promote research in the media and with allies; and
- Encourage MPs and political parties to support the introduction of postal banking and financial services.

# We will remember June 2011 when we vote

**We can never forget what the Harper Conservative government did to us, postal workers, in June 2011. Meanwhile it has been consistently attacking unions and our ability to stand up for workers' rights and human rights.**

Apart from direct interventions to disrupt our right to free bargaining, the federal government has also introduced legislation like bill C-377 to disrupt unions' operations. Harper has also been keenly watching initiatives in Saskatchewan and in Ontario that would threaten the Rand formula, and therefore the platform on which unions currently exist.

Federal and provincial governments, for the benefit of their wealthy campaign funders, are attacking our rights and the hard-fought gains we have made over the years. They have sided with employers by passing back-to-work legislation that obliterates our right to free collective bargaining, including the right to strike.

Now it becomes part of the job of every union in Canada to take out this government and work to restore the political conditions for fair bargaining. All components of CUPW's action plan between now and 2015 are linked with this goal. If we're not successful, and the anti-worker parties remain in power, unions will be weakened and employers will gain advantages, worsening the growing gap between the rich and poor. We would face lower wages, fewer benefits and deteriorating social programs.

When the time comes, CUPW National will consult with the membership and develop materials and research to make union rights an election issue. We'll develop a list of targeted ridings where Conservative candidates can be defeated.

We need locals to reach out to allies now, and mobilize when the election campaign period comes. Workers and supporters will have to attend all-candidates' meetings and raise our rights and our concerns as election issues. We will need to reach out to other community organizations in targeted ridings and make sure that anti-worker candidates are exposed and not elected. We'll participate in election-related campaigns by the Canadian Labour Congress, district labour councils, and other progressive groups.

2015 is not as far off as it may seem. The time is right to begin the discussions and alliances that are needed to put this plan into effect. According to different analyses, the election may be called for the fixed election date in fall 2015 or perhaps sooner, but between now and then there may be crucial by-elections for MP seats.

Workers in our history have fought and sacrificed greatly for our union rights and protections, and the Harper Conservative government is chiseling away at their legacy. We have a plan to work, together with the rest of the labour movement, to put an end to these attacks.

*Continued from front page*

## Challenging postal transformation

- Excessive workload due to improper restructures
- Reduction of day shift work

### Negotiations and arbitrations

Since the back-to-work legislation of 2011 effectively stopped CUPW from negotiating solutions to the problems caused by the introduction of Postal Transformation, we have been pursuing two national arbitrations to address the problems.

Under Article 29 of the Urban Postal Operations agreement (Technological Changes), we are before Arbitrator Brian Keller. This case involves the impact of Postal Transformation on both Groups 1 and 2 workers. More than 30 days of hearings on Group 1 issues have been completed and we are awaiting an interim decision. Currently there are 20 days scheduled from June through December 2013 to hear Group 2 issues.

Under Article 33 (Health and Safety) we are dealing with the two-bundle method of delivery. On April 2, U.S. letter carriers presented evidence about the problems associated with the two-bundle delivery method, which has been used in the United States

for many years. The Union will be submitting further ergonomic evidence and we hope to receive an interim ruling on the health and safety issues this summer. The case regarding Article 47, on route restructuring, will continue in August.

### Continuing the Struggle

In addition to arbitrations, the union is addressing related issues in several ways. The parties have agreed to conduct an Appendix AA Project to address the problems associated with parcel deliveries by motorized letter carriers. We will also conduct a joint validation of more than 200 components of the interim time

standards associated with Postal Transformation. CUPW locals are involved in campaigns to inform the public about service problems resulting from Postal Transformation. Locals have also conducted demonstrations and information sessions.

In article 29.02 the Employer agreed to eliminate all injustices and adverse effects from the introduction of technological change. We will not give up the fight until CPC honours this commitment.



## Let's Rethink Child Care!

Think child care is 'just your problem'? Think again. So many families are struggling to find decent child care and are scrambling to piece together care they can afford.

CUPW members will be hosting Kitchen Table Conversations in the coming months where members share their own experiences of finding and affording quality child care.

We need your help! Contact [infochildcare@cupw-sttp.org](mailto:infochildcare@cupw-sttp.org) to become involved.

These conversations are part of a new multi-union campaign to mobilize members to demand better child care policies and programs from all levels of government. [www.rethinkchildcare.ca](http://www.rethinkchildcare.ca)