

# CUPE Chronicle



Karsten Bellows shows his support for NDP leader, Adrian Dix.

## The Editor's Soap Box

So many issues and so little time. It's hard to know where to start. The first item is to say thank you for voting. Sorry we didn't win. Let's mobilize for the next one in four years.

Secondly, bargaining is under way for K-12 and so far things are not looking good. I hope you are all reading the website, keeping abreast of the issues and considering how you can best support your fellow members in the ongoing talks with our provincial government. It's important to remember that in order

to make change, we must stick together and stand up for what we believe in and what we deserve. The "at least I have a job" attitude needs to be put away for later and right now we need to understand that while the new Liberal government is giving themselves raises (<http://www.bcndp.ca/newsroom/bc-liberals-first-act-government-raises-political-staff>) they are still cutting funding to the public sector and education is taking a big hit. No raises for you and I because they spent it all on themselves?

I would recommend planning for strike action by putting some savings away and paying off some debt.

The third issue is looking outside our local and country to see what is happening around us. Make sure you google the uprisings in Turkey and find out what your fellow workers are fighting for and to what lengths they are willing to go to make their employers do the right thing. Please support them by staying informed. Their hardships are our hardships.

In Solidarity,  
Sylvia Lindgren

## Upcoming Events

June 20 - Job Action - Overtime Ban for all CUPE 523 K-12 employees

October 21 - CUPE National Convention - Quebec





## Turkish Public Sector Workers to go on Solidarity Strike

As protests spread across Turkey, in what is now being called the “Turkish Spring”, unions are joining forces to demand a more open and democratic government.

A general strike in response to the Erdogan government’s heavy-handed answer to the Taksim Gezi Park protests, being planned today by the Confederation of Public Sector Trade Unions (KESK), could see hundreds of thousands of public servants walk off the job.

CUPE has been monitoring the growing conflict in Turkey and stands in solidarity with workers in the streets, condemning in the strongest terms the police brutality they have encountered during their peaceful protests.

To support Turkish workers and unions please visit the [LabourStart website](#)

- For more information read the ITUC article [\*Turkish government must end confrontation and release detained unionists\*](#)
- [\*EPSU/PSI demands respect for the right to expression, right to demonstrate and the right to strike action in Turkey\*](#)

Union membership is like a gym membership.  
Dues are paid to be part of a group with similar  
interests and goals.  
But, just like a gym, if we don't show up, invest  
our time or participate, we do not get  
**STRONGER.**

## President's Message

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Did you know?

Did you know that the first two weeks in June were the week long schools in Naramata?

Did you know that over 100 CUPE people spent a week learning new skills and information.

Did you know that all CUPE employees are welcome to apply to attend workshops and weeklong schools?

Did you know that the material being taught through our union training is relevant in all areas of your work and home life?

Did you know that you can get your wages paid while CUPE pays for your education, your accommodation and your meals?

What are you waiting for?

CUPE was formed in 1963 by merging the National Union of Public Employees and the National Union of Public Service Employees. It has grown to become Canada's largest union, providing a strong voice in support of workers' rights, equality and top quality public services.

I'd like to share some thoughts that have come to me recently. First thoughts are those giving "THANKS":

Thank you for coming out to take part in a strike vote.

Thank you for getting out to vote in the provincial election.

Thank you to those who worked to support the candidate of your choice.

Thank you to all those who come out to meetings.

Thank you to those who support each other.

Thank you to those who have given their e-mail address to the Local office so that they can be kept informed.

We have a member who is working diligently to make sure the website is up-to-date, current and correct.

Thank you to all those who are willing to serve in the union; in whatever capacity you're able, whether it be on the executive, as a shop steward, serving on a committee, helping our fellow brothers and sisters, and coming out to meetings.

Thank you to those to work each day and do their job with pride and efficiency.

Thoughts that follow are those more along the lines of requests:

If you haven't already submitted your email address to the Local office, please do so .

Please don't take on any unnecessary debt. There will be job action in the near future. Things didn't go exactly as some of us would have liked on election night.

Please check the website frequently, it's a wealth of information.

Please go to any of the activities that your Unit and Local are putting on; it's a great way to have fun.

I'd like to end with wishes. Wishes that you all have a safe, relaxing summer. Looking forward to seeing you in the fall.

In Solidarity,

Jean Frolek

President

CUPE 523

250-803-6732



## International Solidarity Trip to Cuba

In April of 2011 I was elected to the International Solidarity committee at the Okanagan Mainline District Council.

I'm proud to say that CUPE BC strongly believes in supporting unions and workers through-out the world. We have much to share and learn from each other. Our provincial division is the only province that has an International Solidarity committee.

Our committee has been bringing in guest speakers to convention to tell our members what is happening to workers in other parts of the world. Over the years (before I joined the committee) the committee has also sent members to places that we support.

This year, members of the committee, along with CoDev Canada (a non-governmental organization) went to Cuba. I was fortunate enough to take part in the trip. After returning, when asked how the trip was, my first response was "life altering". I am so very grateful for everything that I experienced on the trip; it was well worth the money it cost me.

This trip was life altering in many, many ways. I learned that there's a lot that I don't know; for example, the American Trade embargo against Cuba, and the Cuban Five. Please feel free to google both and learn along with me.

While in Cuba, we went to many union organizations. Most of the meetings were events pre May Day. May

1<sup>st</sup> is a statutory holiday in Cuba, with a parade that was unlike any I've ever experienced here in Canada. We were up at 4:30 and on the bus by 5:30 to be at the Plaza de la Revolution on time. At 7:30 people started walking. It was so exhilarating to see a Plaza which holds about 100 people across. For an hour and a half a steady procession of people went by us. What a thrill to see our CUPE flag in the parade, carried by the provincial president of SYNTAP (the Cuban counterpart to CUPE). Such a tremendous showing of solidarity.

Of the many memorable moments, a few really stand out. One is the fact that after I gave the provincial president of SYNTAP our Local pin, my city pin and a CUPE pin, she wore them every day. On the last day when we did a question and answer period in their office, they all laughed when asked about whether they had a workers of colour committee!! That was the day we saw the president cry, when given a couple of packages of batteries (almost impossible to get there) and also when we left CUPE flags.

This trip was truly an eye-opener for me and I'm especially grateful for the opportunity to go on it. I'm grateful for what I learned and who I met, both Cuban and Canadian. It was an experience worth every penny I paid.

In Solidarity,

Jean Frolek





Some members of Local 523 at a recent shop stewarding workshop in Kelowna. This course provided a history and overview of management styles as well as options for confronting poor management. It was awesome.

## Why Should I Come to Meetings?

Why attend a Union meeting?

Information: Find out about bargaining...like job action scheduled for June 20 and what else may occur in September. Hear about the grievances...like the termination that was resolved by bringing the member back, or the other termination that has just occurred. Or the member who was denied a posting and then awarded the position through the grievance procedure. Find out how the LTD plan works. Find out about your legal right to refuse unsafe work or accommodations for returning to work. Anything you're curious about? Come out and ask!

Hear from Fellow Members:

Some say they have nothing in common with members of other units. Yet when they actually take the time to talk to them they realize we are all dealing with the same problems. When we share information we are stronger. And you might just make a new friend or two. We're all in this together!

Understand: Two of our school districts have exercised their Section 54 rights and given the Union notice of significant layoffs. We are all trying to navigate through that notice and the layoffs, hopefully impacting our members as little as possible. One of the Districts wants the Union to agree to allow them to give preference in hiring for certain position to First Nations members. The Social Services units have received a wage increase that was delayed and is not being funded.

Make Decisions: Help decide what the local bylaws say should... like all those members who came out and voted how their Union would look through the restructuring process. Vote on how local funds will be spent on entertainment, education or any other uses. Vote to support sending a young member to a training session in Montreal – or vote to send members as delegates to the National Convention. Decide how your Unit wishes to spend its annual EI rebate.

Win a Prize! Every meeting there is at least six draws for \$25 each and often there are other prizes available. Sometimes there are refreshments available.

Take charge of your work life: As members of CUPE Local 523 you have the right to vote for your representatives. You have a say in your working conditions through your Collective Agreement. You can elect and be on one of various Union and Joint committees with the Employer. The Union wants your feedback – good or bad. Often great ideas start with a simple complaint about something. We need your input.

The meetings generally take about an hour, so it's not a huge time commitment. Check the Union boards or website for times and locations. The meetings travel to every area of Local 523 throughout the year so come out and have your say. Travel costs are paid if three members attend together.

Rob Hewitt

## Looking for Email addresses

### **Future Newsletters will be emailed.**

Please send your email address to [cupe523@telus.net](mailto:cupe523@telus.net) and indicate in the subject line "CUPE 523 Email".



### CUPE 523 executive:

President Jean Frolek  
1st VP: James Fox  
2nd VP: Karsten Bellows  
3rd VP: Deb Johnson  
Recording secretary: vacant  
Secretary- Treasurer: Jose van Berkel

### Unit chairs:

John Howard Society :  
Larry DuPont  
NOYFSS Craeg Pohorelic  
SD 53 Sean Harris  
SD 67 Mike Johnson  
SD 83 Heather Reid

National Rep: Rob Hewitt

Our office:  
288 Westminster Ave.  
Penticton, BC  
Our phone number:  
250-492-2982  
Our website:  
<http://cupe523.ca>

**Please Note: Jose Vanberkel  
has changed her email  
address to  
[cupe523@telus.net](mailto:cupe523@telus.net)**