## Social Service Worker Coordinating Committee Conference

## March 10,11 2021

Attendees – James Cassidy, Dorothy Lockerbie

**Introductions / land acknowledgement / International Decade for people of African descent / CUPE Constitution reading**

**SSWCC introductions from SSWCC Chair.**

**CUPE ON PRES** - Welcoming

**CUPE NATIONAL PRES** – Welcoming

**CUPE ON** - Secretary treasure – Welcoming

**CUPE National Treasure**

-member lays due to COVID were effecting funding for CUPE (reduced dues)

-found 10 million in savings through administration

-were able to keep all services offered by CUPE for its members

-were able keep all CUPE staff

-120 million in strike fund, largest fund in Canada

-Despite loss, CUPE outlined money to support strikes and work action

**BARGAINING**

-Pre-bargaining work is the things that occur between the ratification of 1 agreement and the start of the next one. Engaging members may take different forms of communications using social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), email or text.

- Bill 124 is considered by CUPE On to be a wage restraint Bill and came into effect in 5/19. It is anti-collective bargaining as it freezes wages. Covid has allowed CUPE On to review the language and bargaining within the Bill. The Bill was made retroactive and does not have many amendments. The timeframe is 3 consecutive years with increases of 1%/year for the 3 years. Locals are still allowed to bargain and challenge it, striking is still an option as long as the strike is not about Bill 124. Pay equity is not subject to Bill 124 and losses cannot be made up in year 4. One way of avoiding the Bill is to sign a 1 – 2-year contract rather than a 3 year one.

-Childcare Sector: negotiating wages for members in this sector has been historically underfunded. There is another source of revenue from ‘parent fees’ which can be increased if there is no other alternative. Most childcares centers have parent boards that are included in the communication when the parent fees are to be increased. It is also important to have conversations with parent operators to become allies to working towards money flowing into the childcare sector. There has been lobbying at the provincial and federal levels that resulted in the federal government committing to an increase in the childcare funding in 2020.

- Language in CA surrounding redeployment could be beneficial, but government emergency orders can render CA’s useless due to the Emergency Orders.

- Essential workers definition is different from the Ministry of Labor, compared to what COVID has defined as Essential workers. CUPE believes all members have the right to job action.

**WHEN THERE IS PUSH BACK FOR NO MONEY**

-In addition to Bill 124 many employers are saying $0 increases for staff and if this occurs it is important to request full financial disclosure from the employer during bargaining as it is key to being able to probe the information (benefits, equipment, staff training etc) to find out what is true and why it is true. CUPE On sector researchers can assist with this and outline that member engagement is key in moving the employer. Filing a conciliation or a strike vote can put pressure on an employer. The sector team can assist with this and locals are encouraged to use a multipronged approach to bargaining.

-1% increase in Bill 124 is designed as total compensation costs so it may be higher due to other costs covered by the employer (whatever is paid by the employer on your behalf including benefits, E.I contributions, salary, etc..).

**MISCONCEPTIONS**

Bargaining misconceptions: outlined that not every member of the public is going to care about our issues during bargaining; this speaks to the work that needs to be done to ensure that important issues are understood by all and it is the role of unionized workers to increase public knowledge.

It is important to be well prepared for bargaining in order to get the best deal at the table, have very clear end goals for bargaining. Members have very high expectations of the bargaining committees and it can often take several rounds of negotiations. Members sometimes feel like if they push hard enough they will get everything they want; which might not always be the case depending on the ask and the funding.

The day of ratification doesn’t mean that bargaining is completed; the bargaining committee should reflect on what still needs to be achieved/what wasn’t achieved. Keep issues prevalent by having good communication with your membership (include educational information to the membership). Reach out to CUPE On Sector Teams for help with strategic bargaining. Often the dynamics of bargaining between the committee and the employer is not easy due to the employer obstacles.

The bargaining committee often has more flexibility than the employer due to ‘other marching orders that they need to abide by’. The bargaining committee may see sides of management that are unexpected (good or bad)….remember it’s just business and nothing personal.

Last thoughts: Create a communication plan for your member to increase engagement; move forward with ambitious clarity – bargaining can be challenging, but it can also be a positive experience; having membership contact information is key; remember to thank your bargaining committee.

**HEALTH AND SAFTEY**

As it relates to COVID 19 and vaccinations

* Vaccines have been deemed safe and effective.
* Some members may not be able to be vaccinated due to health/religious beliefs.
* Suggested that if vaccine was mandatory at work and members could not get it there might be options through WSIB appeals - CUPE can support with REP.
* COVID 19 and updates with this can be view on CUPE website (health and safety section)

**MUNICIPAL SOCIAL SERVICES BREAKOUT**

**REPS introduction - Bonnie & Dorothy, and Bill.**

Preamble:

Government relationships have changed since Ford government entered office. Previous relationships that were built with government were ended. New minister Todd Smith did not meet with any CUPE reps about the reforms to Social Services; only delegated senior staff to attend - Deputy minister Janet Menard. Deputy Minister only had 3 meetings with CUPE over 2.5 years. Janet does not work with CUPE as they are not mostly public sector like other unions might be (OPSEU). CUPE has no advance knowledge of government change and is notified like everyone else.

CUPE is working with managers in municipalities as well as organizations such as Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMMSA) to gather more information on the reform to social assistance in Ontario and how it will effect members due to funding reforms. Will differ from municipality to municipality based on Counsel directions and voting.

Municipal Services Break Out Updates and Questions:

-Basic Income? The thought is that it is highly unlikely that a BI program will be looked into at this time; there has been no pilot; no model from the federal government; there is presently a federal private members bill, but that will be dealt with at the federal level.

- Will CW become glorified life coaches: with the new roles of life stabilization and minimal financial delivery roles, CW will have the rights to issue payments to clients, but employment funds will not be available. This could affect job titles and pay scales prompting job evaluations. The provincial funding formula will be revisited with 2022 being the implementation date across the province.

-Most offices have not had staff return to the office and in some there is no plan to return to the office setting working only from home.

-Some staff in Waterloo were given voluntary exit packages specifically ERO and FSW without any thought to the program shutdown. Childcare Centers are being shut down effective 9/21.

-Brantford have reduced their supervisors by creating team lead positions in place of the supervisor positions.

-Toronto had 660 members redeployed or on emergency leave due to not enough redeployment jobs/accommodations. Only have 3 offices open and most staff work from home and go into the office on a rotational basis. They are doing a virtual OW pilot – new unit is human services integration (very like Waterloo setup now), their FSW unit was reduced to 10 staff from 60. They are being told that they will never be at 100% of staff back in the office.

-some areas were seeing increased violence in the workplace (preCovid) and had resources become unavailable to clients because of this; some staff are receiving CERB because they couldn’t be redeployed.

-some areas are seeing the ERO, Overpayment Recovery and EVP redeployed.

-some areas are experiencing the Centralized Intake as pilot areas and they are finding that they have to double check the work of the CI staff; some clients who were issued OW funds were not eligible for the social assistance, the evidence isn’t being put into SAMs correctly, CI staff not understanding the OW legislation and issuing the incorrect amount of SA; and the CW are finding increased verbal aggression because they have to advise clients that they are not eligible for OWA and have incurred an overpayment. Client have also experienced a ping pong effect being pushed between agencies as there is no clear definition of roles. Clients could als be sitting in an unknown work queue for months who continue to receive assistance with no follow up.

Complicated intakes for Ontario Works such as clients with historic files of being closed due to investigations/reviews as well as new Canadians, are being sent to the area offices to complete.

-some areas are experiencing the Employment Services Transformation as pilots (one area lost 1.6 million in provincial funding and 6 people were laid off) and are finding that ‘life stabilization’ is not well defined, they are seeing 50% of their job ready clients being returned by the Employment Ontario Site after being referred because the EO site finds the client to be NOT job ready, those areas that were issuing Employment funds to clients are finding that they can no longer do this and the clients are not receiving the funds from the EO sites; the EO technology isn’t very good and communications needs to be improved.

Overall, Employment Services Transformation Pilot and the Centralized Intake Unit Pilot that is occurring in some areas is very challenging not only for members but for clients; for whom the new system was supposed to be designed in mind, for simpler and more effective services. This does not appear to be the case.

## DAY 2 – SSWCC

**MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT** - PAUL (CUPE ON communication for Social Services)

Making Videos are the wave to the future of communication. Covid has made it hard to engage members and the public and have to find ways around the barrier.

**VIDEOS**

-make sure it's phone friendly.

What videos should you be making:

\*quick updates from executive committee

\*stories, questions and answers

\* share what's happening during a big work change

**IMPORTANT because...**

- Get to give executives air time / messaging to members so they can connect and provide information. .

**MISCONCEPTIONS**

- you need expensive equipment. (just a smart phone will do)

-videos are not worth the time (1 minute you put into pays for itself 10 fold).

-got to be professionally shot (any one can do it)

-it’s too hard (if you are prepared it’s not hard, and gets easier each time)

**RECIPE FOR MAKING A VIDEO**

- camera

-script

-natural light source

-eye level camera level.

-script should only be 150 words per minute

-no more than 2 minutes

**HOW TO DEVELOP SCRIPT**

- write a brief intro, name, local, and role

-lead with a good messaging

-go point by point you want to express

-close with next step for the membership, website, email mpp etc...

**COVID EFFECTING equity seekers**. - Dr. Arjumand Siddiqi (epidemiologist)

- Studying effects of covid and equity seekers

-black working neighbor hoods effected most

**Composition**

- Black population makes up 9% of Toronto population, but had 20% of the COVID cases

- COVID diagnosis also correlated with income inequalities (lower income, higher cases)

- socioeconomic effects covid numbers the most.

-racial inequalities in health is not new, and COVID 19 was just reaffirming the issue.

**VOTING**

VOTING on SSWCC membership completed, results are on CUPE website.