

CUPE NB PRIORITY FOR THE NEXT GOVERNMENT: WAGES, WAGES, WAGES

CUPE New Brunswick members have a very clear recommendation for political parties as the legislature is about to re-open: public sector workers deserve real wage increases. Last spring, members at a bargaining conference and the CUPE NB division convention resoundingly approved “Breaking the Mandate: Bargaining Forward,” an action plan to coordinate bargaining, engage members and mobilize for better wages. After a summer provincial tour where thousands of members participated in sessions about the need for real wage increases, we encourage all parties to work in collaboration with CUPE NB to implement this change that will lead to positive outcomes for workers and for the province.

Commit to increases in real wages

For too long, CUPE members in New Brunswick have suffered losses in real wages. Wages have not kept up with the rising cost of inflation, affecting members’ take-home pay. Public sector workers have had to contend with this general economic increase pattern: 0%, 0%, 2%, 2%, 1%, 1%, 1%, 1%. This means that both Liberal and Conservative governments have demanded that provincial public sector workers accept mandated minimal wage increases totalling just 10 per cent over the past decade. Inflation has increased by 18 per cent over the same period, leaving most workers with a significant decline in their real wages and standard of living.

The provincial government claims a lack of revenue as their excuse for austerity. But at the same time, they’ve cut taxes and wasted money on public-private partnerships. If balancing the budget is a concern, CUPE has many suggestions to increase revenue for the province. In fact, New Brunswick could achieve a budget surplus with progressive tax

Measures	Revenue (all figures in millions, per year)
Closing regressive tax loopholes and addressing tax evasion	+\$50
Re-introducing large corporation’s capital tax at 0.3%	+\$50
Restoring the corporate tax rate to 16%	+\$60
Implementing a wealth tax of 0.5%	+\$75

Wage settlements for public sector workers have increased by less than private sector workers for seven of the last eight years, and by less than inflation for five of the last eight years. We must make up for the loss of buying power since 2008 and include cost of living increases for the upcoming years. **We hope a stable progressive government will commit to negotiating above and beyond CPI increases for public sector workers.**

