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BUILD STRONGER CUPE LOCALS

INVOLVE YOUNG MEMBERS

CUPE
On the front line

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It's about CUPE's future

Welcome to this practical primer on involving young CUPE members in our union. We've put this toolkit together for executives and activists in CUPE locals.

As Canada's biggest, strongest and most diverse union, CUPE has a key role to play in shaping a brighter future for young people. To do that, we need your help. We're counting on CUPE activists who've worked hard to build their local and our union, to engage and empower a younger generation to take over and continue this important work.

This is a period of change – for CUPE as a whole, for public services, and for individual locals. Our population's changing, and so is our workforce. As key activists retire, we need to be ready to replace them. And we also need young members working alongside other CUPE activists, so they can learn from each other and build a stronger union. Without young, active members, our union doesn't have a very bright future.

We hope this guide will help with this work. There's no one-size-fits-all approach. And very few issues are exclusively young workers' issues. You'll find that many of the tips here apply to **any** new member.

As well, we encourage your local to take advantage of the young worker courses offered by CUPE. There's a course devoted to helping CUPE locals involve young members, a 'Know Your Rights' course especially for young members, and a course to train young CUPE leaders.

Doing this work means taking risks and responding to challenges. It means listening, learning and being open. It's valuable work that will have an impact right away, as well as over the long term. It's all about building for tomorrow – today.

CUPE YOUNG WORKERS' WORKING GROUP
APRIL 2004

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**CUPE'S NOT
GETTING ANY
YOUNGER...**



Let's face it. CUPE's getting older. Our union's about to experience a pretty major turnover, as members and staff retire. That's going to have an impact on the union, the workforce, and the public services CUPE members provide.

SHARE THE WORKLOAD

Young workers are ready and willing to move in. Young people are looking for jobs – and looking to get involved in their union. At the local level, it'll bring in fresh ideas and energy and a new crop of activists. Think about the benefits of having more people willing to be trained and take on stewarding, health and safety, communications and other leadership roles in the local. Sharing the union workload is one very good reason to bring in young members.

IT'S ABOUT RIGHTS

Finding and reaching out to young members also helps ensure that each and every CUPE member knows and is enforcing their collective agreement rights, and is being treated fairly in a safe work environment.

Young workers are often the most vulnerable in a workplace. They may be the ones with the temporary or part-time jobs. They frequently work odd hours, under conditions that can be hazardous to their

health and safety. And while they're eager to know their rights, they may not always know where to start.

IT'S ABOUT ENERGY

Involving young members is also about expanding CUPE's base of activists and leaders – locally, provincially and nationally. The energy, experience and ideas of a new generation will keep CUPE strong and dynamic. Revitalizing and re-energizing our union is a key challenge in the coming years. New members who haven't typically been involved in the union, including younger members, will bring fresh approaches and perspectives to our work for equality and social justice in the workplace and in society.

IT'S ABOUT DIVERSITY

Taking action to involve young members goes hand-in-hand with work to ensure the full diversity of CUPE's membership is represented in all the union's work. As young workers take their rightful place in the union, they will join – and contribute to – that broad diversity, ensuring workers of colour and Aboriginal workers, workers with disabilities, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender workers, and women all have a place in CUPE. Those who count on the union for protection and support must be at the heart of the union, providing leadership and strength.

TAKE A LOOK AROUND

How well do you know your local, and your workplace? Do you know what percentage of your members will retire next year? What about in the next five or ten? Has your executive and membership talked about how this will affect your local's base of leaders and activists? Do you have a plan to ensure jobs get filled and new leaders are trained? It's a good idea for your local to develop a plan that prepares for the changes that an aging and changing membership will bring.

WHO'S HERE? WHO'S NOT?

Think about what your workplace looks like, and who's active in your local. Who's on your local executive? Which members come to meetings and participate in committees? Which members tend to get sent to conventions and educationals?

As part of this process, think about whether your workplace reflects the diversity of the population in your community. Are there people missing from the picture, like people of colour, Aboriginal people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, people with disabilities or women? The face of Canada's population has always been diverse – and grows more so every day.

It's also important to be prepared to fight to ensure the jobs of retiring and departing members are filled – not allowed to dwindle away or to be contracted

out or added as extra workload on members left behind. Fighting to hire young members helps everyone in a workplace, ensuring work stays in-house and workloads are manageable.

Once you've assessed what's on the horizon in your local, you can get to work finding and involving young members.



**WHAT DOES A YOUNG
MEMBER LOOK LIKE?**

That's a trick question. It's not fair – or possible – to draw a clear picture of a young member, just like you can't describe the 'average' 55-year-old CUPE member without creating a caricature or stereotype. But there are some things to keep in mind when thinking about younger members.

Most young members are in their twenties but many are younger and in some regions, members in their early thirties are still considered young workers.

Many young people working in CUPE jobs are here to stay. They aren't just passing through on the way to another job, or only around for the summer. With the tight job market of the 1990s, many young people were glad to get public sector jobs that tend to pay more and have better security and benefits than the private sector (thanks to unionization). Young members, just like other CUPE members, take pride in their work and enjoy providing public services. Of course, members with short-term jobs are still part of the picture – and they also have much to contribute to the union.

Young people may be more likely to work casual or part-time shifts, and work irregular schedules as temporary workers. This may not always be by choice. Surveys of shift and part-time workers show a growing number say they have no alternative to the hours they work. Many would prefer full-time work

but can't find a full-time job – or proper childcare. On the other hand, many students who would prefer to devote themselves full-time to their studies are being forced to take part-time jobs to pay rising tuition fees.

Many young workers are highly educated – with debt loads to match. The skyrocketing price of college and university education has given young workers extra motivation to find and hang onto decent public sector jobs. With the average student debt load topping \$25,000, young people are looking for good jobs that will give them the stability to establish their lives.

WHAT ARE YOUNG WORKERS CONCERNED ABOUT?

Young workers have many of the same issues as any other worker – but there are some that affect them more.

- Part-time work
- Job insecurity
- Child care
- Erosion of safety net
- Dead-end jobs
- No benefits
- Low wages
- Not knowing rights
- Harassment
- Not getting information from the union
- Need training
- Unsafe working conditions
- Undeveloped or unrecognized skills

BRIDGES & BARRIERS

There are challenges to involving young members – but the rewards are huge. Here are some barriers to young member involvement, along with ways to bridge the gap.

Barriers

- Young members might fear the employer
- Bad meeting experiences
- Popular misconceptions about unions
- Poor communication in the local
- They're scattered through the workplace and hard to find
- Time constraints – for young members and other members

Bridges

- Regular and varied methods of communicating
- Opening up the local – trying to break down hierarchy and structure
- Mentoring
- Meetings that are welcoming
- Accessible executive members
- A local that takes on social justice issues and other issues beyond the workplace

Read on for more ideas.

**...BUT THERE AREN'T
ANY YOUNG WORKERS
IN MY LOCAL**



Are you sure? Have you looked? And, if there aren't any who are your members, are you sure there aren't young workers in your workplace who would be CUPE members if you enforced or expanded your collective agreement? Before you decide there's no new blood out there to recruit, take a good look around:

- Do a thorough workplace map, keeping in mind the different work sites, shifts and seasons. This will help you identify where young people are in your workplace – whether or not they're union members – and the types of jobs they hold.
- Look at your contract language, starting with your scope clause. Does it include every possible category of worker employed by your employer? Ensure jobs and classifications held by young workers aren't excluded – including casual and part-time workers.
- Do a membership survey, both to look for young members and to get broad feedback on building a stronger local. Ask your members what they'd like more of from the union and how the union can help them. Gathering this kind of information will help shape outreach.
- Organize groups to visit all your worksites (at different times and on different shifts). This is another way of doing a membership

survey that might get better results because you're communicating with members face-to-face. In-person, face-to-face communication is by far the best way of reaching members.

- Meet with all new members. This allows you to give them an orientation to the union and the collective agreement, and to help answer any questions a new member might have. It also allows you to identify young members, and to recruit new members to get active in CUPE.
- Pay special attention to any list of casual or part-time workers. There are almost sure to be young members here.



**REACHING YOUNG
MEMBERS**

It's a challenge to get any new member involved in the union, and in some ways young members are no different. But it's a myth that young people don't care about unions, and don't want to be part of a union.

GET CREATIVE

Part of the secret to reaching new members is not relying on the same old methods. Did your last union meeting draw many members – not to mention young members? When was the last time your local executive went to meet with members at their worksites? As much as possible, try to find new and different ways to reach young members. You'll probably find other interested members along the way – so reaching out will benefit all your members.

USE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

An important first step is mapping your workplace and identifying where those young members are. Having a 1 in 10 communicators' network can help with this work, and can ensure good two-way communication in your local. The best forms of two-way communication, where members can give feedback as well as receive information, are face-to-face.

SET UP A BUDDY SYSTEM

Think back to when you first became a union member. The lingo didn't all make sense. The meetings probably seemed strange. You may not have been quite sure what your role was, and it seemed like a small group of people 'owned' the executive jobs. But you wanted to get involved – and at some point or other, someone lent a hand. Don't wait, take the initiative. Have a buddy system where new members are accompanied to their first meeting and union events.

KEEP MEETINGS ON TRACK AND INTERESTING

A note on meetings. When you do have meetings, have a clear agenda. Set a time limit and stick to it. Make sure there's a clear decision-making process and fair, strong facilitation. Explain what's happening as you go along. Have a period in every meeting where new members can ask questions. Give practical information, and leave lots of time for leaders to listen and respond to members' feedback. There's nothing worse than a three-hour meeting where members are talked at by someone, with no chance to have their say. Don't expect everyone to know or like the rules, especially parliamentary rules of order.

Try and have something fun or different as part of the meeting, or an incentive like a door prize to bring out new people. And get the word out after meetings about what went on, including the fun stuff. Slowly you might coax people into coming out to meetings. Meetings are an important tool. But

there are other ways of sharing information in a local and making decisions, so don't get too hung up on lots of meetings.

LISTENING IS KEY

Young members want to be listened to and heard. They don't want just to listen to others. So no matter how you do it, reaching out means listening, and acting on what you hear. Create spaces in your local's activities where the executive can hear from young members and other members. Be available. Be sure to have a variety of ways that you can be reached – union office, email, phone, pager, message box, your local's website. Being available can be as simple as a drop-in on a coffee break once a week, where members know they can meet their chief steward for an informal chat. Be prepared to listen actively – taking action and making changes based on the feedback and information you get when you listen.



**INVOLVING
YOUNG MEMBERS**

Young members are an important part of our organization. We encourage all young members to get involved in our activities and to help us build a strong future for our organization.

For more information, contact your local chapter or visit our website at www.iaa.org.

More often than not, if you ask someone to help you with something, give them the information and support they need to do it, and give constructive feedback, they'll get involved.

Let members know the work they're doing is valuable. Stuffing envelopes may not seem glamorous, but if the local president's helping out alongside the newest member, it sends a message that this work counts. Share the 'good' work and the 'grunt' work around as much as possible.

One way of looking at the challenge is to break it into three parts: CUPE needs to inform young members, inspire them, and involve them. Here are some suggestions:

INFORM

This means educating young members about unions and their rights. By helping young members understand what they are able to do and what is possible, you help build activists. Education – whether it's formal courses, mentoring or one-on-one informal chats – will make the difference. This can include running Know Your Rights workshops in your local on a regular basis, for young members and new members.

INSPIRE

Think back to the moment when you knew getting involved in the union was the right thing to do, when you wanted to do more, when you were inspired to fight for workers' rights. What did it feel like? How did it happen? How can we develop the same feelings in young workers?

INVOLVE

Unless someone is truly involved in the workings of the union, they won't feel like they're part of this thing called CUPE. They will not know how the local works or understand the difference the union makes in members' lives.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Reaching out to young members – or any new member – means sharing information. Try and give people information that’s practical and related to their job. Helping members understand how the union works will make them feel more comfortable, and like they belong. Giving members the tools to know their rights and enforce them is key. Knowledge is power, and it’s up to you to share the wealth...This is where courses like the Know Your Rights and Young Leaders workshops are useful tools to reach out and mobilize young members.

[See Appendix A for a description of CUPE’s young workers education program.]

Here are some tips that will set the scene for involving young members:

REMEMBER WHO IT IS YOU'RE TRYING TO REACH

It's new people, not the veterans. So new approaches are good. And plain language is a must. All your members will appreciate accessible language that doesn't use acronyms or jargon. Clear language includes everyone, and allows everyone to speak and understand. That's key to participating in the union.

GIVE NEW MEMBERS AN ORIENTATION

An orientation is a chance to talk about union victories and principles. It can include some of the local's history as well as CUPE and labour movement history. It'll let members know about their rights under the collective agreement. And it's a chance to explain the reasoning behind some of the structures they'll encounter, often for the first time – explaining, for example, that seniority is a way of avoiding employer favouritism and ensuring fair advancement in a workplace. The Know Your Rights workshop can help here.

GIVE NEW MEMBERS TOOLS THEY CAN USE

A good example is the highlights of your local's collective agreement, written in plain and clear language. CUPE has resources that can help you explain union terms in clear language – and rewrite your collective agreement so that it will be easier for all members to understand.

KEEP EDUCATIONAL SPOTS FOR YOUNG MEMBERS

Opening the door to educationals for young members is key. Sharing knowledge and training is what builds a new generation of activists. Sometimes, the same activists end up attending every year's weeklong school, or weekend courses. Of course, it's important that veteran activists keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date. But newer members should also be a priority.

Some locals think of education as an investment that can only be made in members they know will stick around for the long haul, and given limited financial resources that's not unreasonable. But remember that lots of young members are here to stay. So give young members the opportunity to get more involved in the local by sharing educational opportunities.

SELECT YOUNG MEMBERS AS CONVENTION AND CONFERENCE DELEGATES

Getting young members involved in this aspect of the union's decision-making breaks the mold that convention or conference spots are rewards for lifetime achievement. Sending a young member as part of your delegation to the union's privatization conference, or women's conference, also allows them to deepen their understanding of and involvement in the issues CUPE is taking on.

DESIGNATE EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

This can be as simple as ensuring that one of your local's current executive positions is held by a younger member, and then recruiting actively when it comes to elections. Encouraging turnover in your executive doesn't have to mean a loss of continuity and institutional memory. Elections can be staggered so half the executive is elected every year or two years, ensuring there is both continuity and new energy. Once you have a young person on your executive, make sure they get the support and training they need to be a productive, fully functioning executive member.

INCLUDE YOUNG MEMBERS IN OTHER LOCAL COMMITTEES AND DECISION-MAKING BODIES

Have a young person on your local's bargaining committee, social committee, communications committee or other group. Organizing a local young members' committee isn't a bad idea, but watch out for tokenism. Remember to involve these members in the broader work of the union. The goal is to ensure everyone's issues and needs are being met in the day-to-day work of the local. That can't happen unless young members have a voice in shaping how the local operates and makes decisions.



**MENTORING FOR
THE FUTURE**

Building a broader base of involved and engaged members means sharing skills and experience. A great way to do this is through a mentoring program that pairs young members with more experienced members. Combined with access to educational programs, it will spark new involvement in your local.

Union executives rarely consider who will replace them when they move on. A local that's successful and sustainable, and has prepared for the future, won't collapse when a few key individuals leave. Instead, it will be prepared with a new generation of leaders.

A FEW MENTORING TIPS:

- Be prepared to share power
- Mentors shouldn't assume they know it all – they will learn from the experience too
- Listen
- Give the person you're mentoring challenges
- Choose tasks that will help build skills and confidence

Justices.

Les poursuites sont en cours. Ils ont des contacts. Rozoni ne de l'argent (Serjakist)

2e: Les poursuites contre les cols bleus et les syndicalistes

**CONTRACTS
THAT PROTECT
AND INCLUDE
YOUNG MEMBERS**



Getting young members' concerns on the bargaining agenda is a concrete way of reaching out to young members – both to find out what their concerns are, and to then show your local's taking action and cares.

Young members often have the same concerns as any other member. But there are some issues that, while they might be common, are experienced slightly differently by young members – for example, wages, job security and scheduling concerns. Negotiating gains for young members can be a challenge – there are costs to the employer just as with any workplace improvement. But they mean a lot to the working conditions of young members. Here are a few solutions – and the problems they address:

NEGOTIATE A SCOPE CLAUSE THAT INCLUDES ALL WORKERS IN THE WORKPLACE

That means ensuring all part-time and casual workers are members of the union, and expanding the contract coverage to bring in job types or classifications that are currently not covered by the collective agreement. By negotiating the broadest possible scope clause, you'll be sure all workers are CUPE members, including young members who are often in the jobs or classifications left out.

END TWO-TIERED WAGE SCHEDULES

Often contracts contain a wage schedule for full-timers and a separate one for part-time or casual workers. In some cases, certain departments or types of jobs are separated out into their own pay schedule, such as recreation workers or library pages. This is sometimes even the case where pay equity agreements and job evaluation plans exist.

Two-tiered wage schedules aren't fair.

Unfortunately, they can date far back in the union's history, making the wage gaps considerable. Unions have a choice of slowly chipping away at the wage disparity or committing to solving it as they did pay equity issues between inside and outside workers. In any case, the issue must be addressed.

BARGAIN EQUAL BENEFITS FOR ALL

Some contracts reserve benefits like medical coverage, vacations and even pay premiums for regular employees, excluding casual and part-time employees. This is another inequity based on the belief that these workers are only putting in a few hours a week, so they should not get these benefits. Again, all workers should have a right to these benefits.

PROTECT FULL-TIME JOBS

As cutback pressures mount, some locals have bargained away full-time work and been pressured into letting these jobs become casual or part-time. This may be cheaper for the employer but in the end it undermines all full-time workers. This is something unions must fight to change. One way to gradually turn back the tide is to negotiate clauses that convert part-time or casual positions to regular ones if they work over a certain number of hours after a certain amount of time.

IMPROVE SCHEDULING LANGUAGE

While previous generations fought to reduce their workload to a 40-hour week, a new generation is also fighting for 40-hour work weeks – but from the other direction. Some young members are struggling for more hours, and are forced to work two or more jobs just to make enough to survive.

These young workers would often prefer staying at one job, rather than racing around town between different jobs and trying to coordinate their schedules. The solution to this is negotiating stronger scheduling language for part-time and casual members. This language would allow those who have chosen part-time work to keep the flexibility of fewer hours, while creating room for those who want more work to find it.

NEGOTIATE LANGUAGE THAT ALLOWS YOUNG MEMBERS TO ADVANCE AND EXPAND THEIR SKILLS WHILE RESPECTING SENIORITY

Negotiate training language that allows all members to be trained, no matter their seniority. If only a few employees can be trained, allocate opportunities for training using a ratio that considers both seniority and age in order to make sure some young members have access to training even when they are not the most senior candidates.

New and young workers should have an opportunity for health and safety training even before they begin the job. All training should be funded 100 per cent by the employer and should be 100 per cent union-based and voluntary.

FOR SAMPLE CONTRACT LANGUAGE AFFECTING YOUNG WORKERS, VISIT CUPE.CA.



**THINKING BEYOND
THE BULLETIN BOARD**

Communicating is key to reaching and involving young members. But it's got to be creative communications. Here, tone and approach are a big part of the puzzle. Humour is often a good ice-breaker. Using plain, clear language that's free from insider's jargon includes everyone. And being open to two-way communication makes a world of difference. Here are some ways to think beyond the bulletin board:

USE NEW TECHNOLOGIES LIKE EMAIL AND THE WEB

If your local doesn't have a website, or if your executive members don't all have email addresses, now's the time to do both. But if you take the plunge into the world of the Internet, you must make the commitment to update your website regularly, and to check your email regularly. There's nothing worse than an out-of-date, irrelevant website, or an urgent email that goes unanswered for days because the recipient only checks his or her mail once a week. These new technologies are immediate and instant.

To set up a local website or open a web mail account, visit cupe.ca.

BULLETIN BOARDS ARE OKAY

Beyond the bulletin board doesn't mean **no** bulletin board. But any worksite display has to be eye-catching, clean and current. Post useful

information like decisions taken at a meeting, and upcoming events in the local and the community. Include fun things too – like comics. And remember to take things down when they're out of date.

GO ON WORKSITE VISITS

This is one of the best ways to meet members and hear from them directly, letting them have a say in the local and identify any problems they're facing. You'll meet new members, and they'll put a face to the union through you.

ORGANIZE SOCIAL EVENTS

Bust the myth that unions are no fun. Put resources into building the social side of your local. And hand that organizing to young members. Let them organize events that appeal to them...you'll be amazed what comes out!

GET INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY AROUND YOU

In the same way that social events play an important role in your local, so does community. Many of your members are probably plugged into activities in their communities, from softball teams to social justice struggles. Young members are no exception, and may be even more likely to be involved in environmental and social justice activism. Ask members with community connections to share their information with the rest of the local through a lunchtime presentation or an article in the newsletter.

Take steps to involve your local in community activities – to have a CUPE presence in the community. Join in the fight for increased funding for post-secondary education, for reduced tuition and improved bursaries. It will help show young members the relevance of the union, and will build allies in the community.



**RESOURCES TO
HELP YOUR LOCAL**

WWW.YOUNGWORKERS.CUPE.CA

Visit this website for the latest in news, views and resources.

YOUNG WORKER EDUCATION: A PLANNING GUIDE

This guide provides information on CUPE's young worker education program. You can obtain a copy from a Union Development Representative or download a copy from cupe.ca

YOUNG WORKER COMMITTEES

Check to see whether your division has a young worker committee or contact CUPE National's Young Workers Working Group at youngworkers@cupe.ca.

COMMUNICATING CUPE

This guide offers some good ideas for reaching out and involving members. You can get a copy from a Communications Representative or download the information from cupe.ca

OTHER LABOUR BODIES

The Canadian Labour Congress and many federations of labour have special resources – materials, workshops, conferences – for young workers. Contact them to see what might be most useful to your local.



APPENDIX A

CUPE YOUNG WORKERS EDUCATION PROGRAM

CUPE's young workers education program aims to develop a new generation of labour activists by helping locals educate and involve young members, and by training young members to become leaders and peer educators. This program includes the following three workshops:

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

A two-hour orientation to workplace rights and the union, designed for young and new members. Participants learn about key statutory and contract rights, practice finding clauses in the collective agreement, and identify options for dealing with workplace problems. You'll get a sense of how the union works and where you can play a role. The workshop is tailored to your local and collective agreement.

INVOLVING YOUNG MEMBERS

A workshop for local officers and other activists who want to mobilize young members. It can run in either a three-hour or day-and-a-half format. Participants explore how young members can contribute to the union and what issues are important to them. We look at the barriers young members face in becoming union activists and ways to overcome those hurdles.

Practical skills in mentoring, communication, and developing strategies are built into the course, equipping you with the knowledge and know-how to get more young members involved in the union.

YOUNG LEADERS WEEKLONG

A weeklong training for young CUPE members who want to become more active in the union and involve other young workers in the process. We'll talk about the role of unions, and what we've achieved over the years. You'll learn communication, group work and leadership skills that will help you in working for social change. With new knowledge of facilitation methods, you'll get practice in leading the Know Your Rights workshop. By the time you leave, you'll have the know-how to facilitate this workshop and ideas for inspiring other young members within the union.

For more information contact your Union Development Representative.

