

## National Post-Secondary Task Force Meeting

December 08-10 – Ottawa, ON

### Manitoba Representative Report

CUPE National's Post-Secondary Task Force met in Ottawa, Ontario from December 08-10, 2014. The meeting provided an opportunity for task force members to continue their effort to make post-secondary education a priority in Canada. During the meeting, representatives discussed current issues and trends at locals, provincial post-secondary education sector trends and to a larger extent cross-compare the realities our workers face throughout the country. The meeting also provided an opportunity for representatives to develop effective tactics and strategies to ensure post-secondary education is a prioritized public good for the betterment to Canadians and the Canadian work force.

Representatives spoke about the recent developments on their respective campuses with a majority of representatives articulating the increasing prevalence of austerity measures being taken by post-secondary administrations. A number of provinces have risen against proposed austerity measures, including Quebec and Saskatchewan. The impact of austerity measures include the reduction of staffing, the reduction of teaching staff, increased class sizes, increased workloads for existing employees, and an attack on benefits, such as pension plans. The implementation of belt tightening within the post-secondary sector works in tandem with the increasing rates of tuition fees. The coupled effect of austerity measures on campus and increased tuition fees is eroding the quality of education that is provided to students. With the increased downloading of costs to students and families the ability to educate and promote the economic vitality in Canadian post-secondary education is in jeopardy.

The bleak picture of austerity measures facing our membership provided task force representatives with a number of strategies to fight back and protect our education as a public good. In addition to representatives continued efforts to educate our respective memberships on the intricacies behind educational funding and its impact on education but also the impact to the individual member. The task force is committed to developing useful tool kits and information, in addition to, kick starting campaigns within CUPE. We want to ensure the issues facing our members working in the post-secondary sector are addressed while also ensuring the larger community understands the importance of protecting our public institutions.

It is imperative that the work of the National Task Force on Post-Secondary education continues. Although post-secondary education is a provincial jurisdictional concern our struggles from coast to coast are the same. CUPE members must be united to take on the fight against austerity.

In Solidarity,

Brianne Goertzen