

Why do I pay Union Dues?

By accepting a job in a unionized workplace you agree to pay union dues to the Union that represents you. Every organization needs resources to perform their work. Unions are no different.

In addition to the service of a CUPE rep who assist you in negotiating your contract, and accessing CUPE services, Unions fund research, political action, and campaigns to improve living and working conditions for working people everywhere. The work that is done in these endeavors benefits us all. Unions are directly responsible for lobbying and working with governments to set policies which we are probably take for granted today : 5 day work week, paid holidays, minimum wage, overtime, CPP, EI, WSIB, etc are all legislated because of the work Unions have done.

When a group organizes we do our best to negotiate increases which cover at least the union dues. We have successfully done this in 25/26 of our centres. By doing this, we essentially cover the cost of the dues for the entire time of each workers employment (ie if not for the union, the workers would not have received the wage increases). Unions usually have much higher wages, benefits, job security, and protection than nonunion workers.

Our Union believes in organizing in small workplaces. We think this is more democratic, and allows members to have more participation and control over their workplace issues. This, however, is extremely time consuming and costly. The time spent in organizing and negotiating contracts is roughly the same whether the workplace has 5 employees or 500.

Our Union tries to balance out these costs by using two kinds of resources: Volunteers and Paid Labour. The more volunteer time given by members to the work of the Union, the less union dues we need to collect.

Unfortunately due to the nature of our work, lack of interest, and the demands on members outside their jobs, members have very little time left to get training and volunteer their time.

How do we spend the dues money we collect?

Roughly half of the dues money goes directly to CUPE National/Ontario Division to cover the cost of central campaigns, staffing, legal, WSIB, Health and Safety, strike funds, support services, operating costs, etc. We vote on the National/Provincial budget at conventions.

Our Local collects the remainder. We vote each year on how we want to spend that money. A detailed budget for our local is mailed to each centre and can be emailed or sent to each member upon request

Because we have such small workplaces, and a relatively low level of volunteer hours, we decided to hire a FT staff person of our own to assist stewards, members, and CUPE staff rep. We are supporting members of several childcare organizations (Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare; Toronto Coalition for Better Childcare; Canadian Childcare Federation to name a few).

We provide educationals and training to any member who asks, either by sending them to weekend “union schools” which occur throughout the year, organizing training at your centre, or by booking you off work for a week of intense training at our annual steward training session. We use your dues to cover the cost of the courses, instructors, materials, and wages for the members who attend training during the workday, and childcare costs for parents who need it in order to attend.

Because our Stewards volunteer their time to assist coworkers in their workplaces, we cover the cost of booking one person per centre off work, 5 mornings a year, to attend Steward meetings where we update stewards on issues, provide information and answer questions.

To facilitate member participation in their union, we provide meals at every meeting which last longer than 1 hour after work. We also provide free childcare or cover the costs of childcare for members who incur those costs to attend meetings. We reimburse members for parking and mileage, when they do work on behalf of the union.

We provide approximately \$10,000 annually in bookoff funds to ensure that members who are interested can participate in conferences, conventions, and political/lobbying work on behalf of their fellow union brothers and sisters.

We hold 2 parties per year for members to socialize and celebrate our victories. We participate in the labour day ad pride parade.

We rent an office in downtown Toronto, so that all members have a central place to meet, and where we can keep our files/equipment.

We choose projects each year, and use funds to bookoff members to work on those projects.

We have two standing committees (Personnel and Health and Safety), these are run by volunteers, but we provide honorariums and cover bookoff costs when the workload merits.

We ensure that our Local and the interest of our members is represented at the city, provincial and federal level of government, by sending our staff person and booking off members to attend/ lobby for improvements to childcare funding. We have successfully lobbied for Pay Equity funding, wage grants, and per diem increases.

Please get involved. The more you participate, the more you will learn and appreciate your union.