

NEB REPORT



THIS CONVENTION WAS
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BY
CANADIAN
LABOUR & GOODS

Annual Report

2022

Annual Report

2023

Annual Report

2024

Mid Year Report

2025



GREETINGS delegates

Greetings Delegates

The past few years have tested us—from the tail end of the COVID-19 crisis to global instability, domestic austerity threats to a changing federal political landscape. There has been much upheaval, yet you have met every challenge with strength and resilience. You've led with confidence, with boldness and with compassion.

The heart of the National Union of Public and General Employees' is seen when we unite workers. You'll see that our convention theme reflects that connectedness and the incredible value of our collective power.

Each and every voice matters, and together, we are unstoppable.

So, it's your union and it's our union to build and draw strength from:

- to fight the good fight for ourselves and for the public good
- to defend and expand our rights as workers and for the dignity of all.
- to lead on critical issues for members and for our communities.
- to contribute to strengthening a movement that includes all 425,000 NUPGE members, three million unionized workers in Canada and all those that are working to build a better future for everyone.

Today, we are proud to present you with this National Executive Board report that offers a reflection on the union's collective work since the last triennial convention: where we've been, what we've accomplished, and a glimpse into the work that lies ahead. This is just a snippet of the excellent work conducted by the National Union but there is so much more. Each year we produce an Annual Report that documents the issues convention delegates, and the National Executive Board have prioritized and the ways in which we have carried out that work. To find more detailed information, please visit www.nupgeconvention2025.ca/documents/

Together, we are 13 components, united by our values of hard work, fairness, equity, and justice to improve the lives of members and all workers, and to serve the public good in our communities and beyond.

Your leadership has inspired meaningful action. You've organized, you've resisted, and you've delivered real wins for each other and for people everywhere. And you've made this happen with determination, compassion, and a focus on dignity for everyone.

Our advocacy has helped shape real change. This year alone, we were proud to see the Sustainable Jobs Act and Pharmacare Act passed—two hard-fought victories that reflect decades of pressure by the labour movement to ensure workers are protected in a changing economy and that families can access life-saving medication. We must remember that these steps are just the beginning, not the end. But they are moving us in the right direction.

The addition of 11,000 more health care workers has made our union even stronger. NUPGE is now the fastest-growing union of healthcare professionals in the country.

Internally, we've strengthened our capacity at the national level with the addition of a Director of Communications, Political Action and Campaigns, and with two new national representatives. Building talent allows us to take on more challenges, react more swiftly, and deliver more for our members.

And, at every chance, we've created space for connection, leadership, and collective action.

At the same time, we've pushed back hard against threats to our rights. Whether it's standing in solidarity with education workers in Ontario defending or gender-diverse youth in Saskatchewan against the use of the notwithstanding clause or challenging for-profit incursions into public health care or public services, NUPGE has remained a leading voice on workers' rights and all human rights.

We've been able to sound the alarm on federal back-to-work legislation that erodes the right to strike. We continue to fight for the right for all workers to collectively organize, and we fight for things that will benefit everyone like keeping health care public. We fight because our rights must not only be won but protected and expanded.

In 2025, we face renewed global instability, with a second Trump presidency already impacting Canadian workers. His tariffs are triggering layoffs and anxiety across auto and steel industries, and his disregard for Canadian sovereignty has shaken many. Our response has been to strengthen solidarity and unity: "Elbows up."

We will continue to work shoulder to shoulder with workers from all sectors to fight back against austerity, protect jobs, and demand accountability from our governments.

Many of our members have also made history. After two decades of effort, precarious part-time workers in Ontario's community colleges finally won union representation—one of the largest organizing victories in Canadian labour history. This is a reminder that no matter how long the road, perseverance and solidarity win.

We also registered once again as a Third Party to ensure that you had the tools to make informed choices during the federal election. In an era of political volatility and deepening inequality, we know that our influence matters—and that y/our union must always be a clear voice for reliable information, fairness, and the public good.

And we have and will continue to listen and advocate for specific needs of our members. Whether it's forest firefighters fighting for recognition and fair treatment, or our healthcare members facing burnout, we have raised these issues as a national concern. We fight with confidence knowing that our work is ourselves and the people we serve.

It's the same principles that guide all of us—at the bargaining table, in political advocacy and campaigns, and in our alliances with civil society groups. We fight for our members, and for a more just and sustainable world.

Our movement is about resistance, but also about care, about a vision, and about hope.

None of this would be possible without the commitment of our National Executive Board, our talented and hard-working staff, and most importantly, you - our members. You are at the heart of everything we do. Your dedication, day in, day out, your activism, your strength, and your sense of the common good have made NUPGE a force to be reckoned with.

Together, we are making a difference. And together, we will keep working to build a better future—for workers, for communities, and for generations to come.

In solidarity,

Bert Blundon

Jason MacLean

**IN
SOLIDARITY**

NUPGE's Mission

As a national union, our mission is to fight for the well-being and rights of NUPGE members. We also use our collective power to champion issues that concern the public at large, especially the most vulnerable people in our communities. Keeping health care public, securing pensions for all workers, fighting for increased tax fairness – these are issues that will benefit the greater good.

Saying Goodbye

Last year, we said farewell to one of NUPGE's longest standing Presidents, James Clancy. James was a trailblazer in the labour movement, a staunch advocate for social justice, and a visionary when it came to creating compelling campaigns to galvanize the energy of our members across the country. A skillful tactician, Clancy saw the growing divide between the rich and the rest of society. He fought the austerity measures governments were pushing, as well as the rise of privatization designed to feed the profits of the already powerful. In 2010, NUPGE launched a campaign that would address those problems and provide solutions. Building on the well-established work of the union on issues of fairness and justice, the All Together Now! campaign was created using the strength of our members. Today, we can hear his warnings about the need for Canada to develop a modern industrial strategy as we fight off US tariffs.

A proud social unionist, he fought to improve wages and working conditions, but he also worked to organize the unorganized, supporting workers who were often overlooked and undervalued, and advocating for the more vulnerable in society.

Building Power, Connecting Members

Strategic advice, research, government relations, and campaign creation are just some of the ways the National Union has supported Components over the last few years. Our goal is to build capacity for our unions, for our members, and for the labour movement.

An important way we support our Components is when we coordinate workers from across the country to share insights, develop common strategies and build solidarity. These gatherings take the form of working groups, committees (and special committees), and conferences.

Over the last three years, NUPGE has brought more than 253 members together at 184 committees, working groups, and conferences. Members have been able to connect with others facing similar challenges and sharing strategies and solutions. These relationships live on beyond adjournment and help strengthen our union.

We have established our two-day Issue Forums where committee members can meet, build solidarity, and strategize solutions. The structure includes one day of engaging with expert speakers on issues relating to the work of the committees, and one day of committee discussions. Feedback has been positive for these new opportunities to gain experience and connect.

Our Leadership Development School held every August, under the instruction by Elaine Bernard, the former Director of the Harvard Trade Union Program, remains a prestigious gathering. It is a special weeklong school incorporating strategic thinking and problem solving with speakers from allies or issue experts. This educational opportunity helps existing and emerging leaders enhance their critical thinking skills to continue to build responsive and resilient unions.

National Leadership

We continue to value the role the Canadian Labour Congress plays in bringing both private and public unions together. Our presence on the Executive Board ensures that we are at the table to engage in developing strategy on significant issues at the national level.

Over the last three years provincial governments, specifically Ontario and Saskatchewan, used the notwithstanding clause to override fundamental rights and freedoms protected under the Charter. Other jurisdictions like New Brunswick and Alberta have threatened to use it as well. When invoked preemptively, it sets a dangerous precedent—allowing governments to sidestep constitutional scrutiny and roll back hard-won rights without the checks and balances essential to a healthy democracy.

As a union, we should be proud of the opposition we have helped against these recent attacks. We will continue to raise the alarm about the threat posed by overriding constitutional rights—organizing campaigns and leading protests to increase public pressure on governments. We will continue to work with our allies and human rights advocates to challenge the legitimacy and necessity of such actions. Most importantly, we will continue to educate members and the broader public about what's at stake—reinforcing the idea that rights are not negotiable, and that any attempt to weaken them must be met with organized resistance.

A significant moment was in 2023, at the end of the pandemic, where the National Union was invited to participate in the Liberal governments' consultation process at the Union-Led Advisory Table (ULAT). Through ULAT, labour leaders provided advice to the federal government on how to support workers through disruptions in the labour market, like climate change, new technologies, and an aging workforce. The advisory table looked at training and skills development, retirement security, staffing shortages, and improving equity.

NUPGE emphasized investing in public services as critical to withstanding labour market disruptions and transitioning to a more equitable and sustainable economy. Of particular importance to NUPGE are the recommendations on addressing the health human resources crisis, investing in public post-secondary education, and taking steps to strengthen equity and inclusion. The final report was published in early 2025.

The National Executive Board met in Halifax in 2024 during the Council of the Federation Meeting to send a message to leaders that privatization has no place in public health care. We continued to sound the alarm on the health human resource crisis unfolding across the country. Health care professionals everywhere are fighting burnout from short staffing, from increasingly complex conditions of patients, and underfunding.

That's one of the main reasons NUPGE engaged our health care members in a first-ever survey into working conditions, challenges being faced, and solutions that will make their jobs and health care overall better. With over 6,000 members participating, the survey gives voice to the diverse workforce keeping our health care system functioning. These workers are often overlooked despite the valuable role they play. This is the first step in a 3-phase campaign to promote the work our healthcare members do, the challenges they face, and the solutions to the problems within our national system of care.

NUPGE has been active at the federal level on prominent issues launching bold campaigns to fight for the future. From our Climate Change at Work campaign to demanding fairness for forest firefighters, to exposing the scapegoating of international students for the housing crisis, the National Union is not afraid to speak truth to power.

NUPGE on the Global Stage

NUPGE is a member of Public Services International (PSI), which gives us opportunities to join the global discussion on workers' rights and issues. Participating in the meetings around global health has been key to understanding the international landscape, especially regarding privatization.

In 2023, at the PSI World Congress, NUPGE played strong role in establishing a global LGBTQA+ coordinating committee, with a liaison person and observer at the PSI Executive Board. This change was passed after heated discussions and moving contributions from comrades across the world. The next World Congress will be in 2028.

NUPGE also participates in the PSI North America Affiliates Sub-Regional Advisory Committee (SUBRAC) and with the PSI Inter-America Health Workers' Union Federation, where Secretary-Treasurer Jason MacLean is one of Canada's representatives on the steering committee.

Solidarity knows no borders. This means speaking out against human rights violations, supporting humanitarian responses to crises, showing solidarity with workers and trade union movements around the world, and supporting migrant and refugee rights. NUPGE donates to international causes through the John Fryer Fund.

NUPGE has continued to support the labour and social movements in Colombia, particularly through our relationship with the Colombian lawyers' collective, CAJAR. This year, we supported the delegation of Ecuadorian women human rights defenders who were in Canada to raise awareness of environmental and human rights violations in Ecuador, particularly the impacts of Canadian mining companies, in the context of negotiations for a Canada-Ecuador free trade agreement. NUPGE also welcomed the delegation to speak with members at the Issues Forum and a joint letter about the trade talks was submitted to the Canadian government. This letter was signed by the Canadian Association of Professional Employees, United Steelworkers, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Public Service Alliance of Canada.

NUPGE has continued to speak out about the crisis in Gaza through statements and letters and working with coalitions. We continued to pressure the federal government on ending Russia's invasion of Ukraine and supporting the Ukrainian people.

Rights and Dignity for All

We cannot underestimate the challenges that workers and unions have been facing in recent years. We know that labour cannot win these fights without broader support.

When unions unite with other organizations—whether they're in health care, education, climate action, or human rights—they amplify their collective voice. That power can't be ignored by employers, governments, or the public.

Working with like-minded organizations is an important part of our solidarity. Non-profit civil society groups have valuable knowledge and insight into many issues our members care about. Governments and corporations coordinate their attacks on rights and services. We must do the same in defense. When allies stand together, we create a united front that's harder to divide or defeat.

We have long standing relationships with some groups, like the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG), Canadian Red Cross, Oxfam, and Child Care Now, while others are just beginning like with the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), Migrant Rights Network, and the Canadian Council for Refugees.

One of the new groups that we have worked with is the Black Class Action Secretariat. In 2020, a class action lawsuit was filed in the Federal Court of Canada on behalf of Black Canadians. The lawsuit is seeking long-term solutions to permanently address systemic racism and discrimination in the Public Service of Canada.

The case is directed at self-identifying Black individuals who applied for employment with the Public Service of Canada and were denied entry based on their race. It also includes those who were employed but were denied promotions based on their race. This refers to current employees and to those who have been employed within the past 52 years. Damages include the wrongful failure to promote, intentional infliction of mental suffering, constructive dismissal, wrongful termination, negligence, and in particular, violations of employment law and human rights law, and Charter breaches.

In 2023, to support this fight for justice NUPGE provided a donation to help activists work full-time on the lawsuit and for staffing for the BCAS. Jason MacLean became a BCAS board member that year.

Conclusion

This summary is just a snippet of the excellent work conducted by the National Union but there is so much more to say. I encourage you to read our Annual Reports on our website to find more details about our work.

Despite the challenges we face and through the obstacles we overcome, we gain strength and inspiration from you, the members, as well through the broader labour movement, and our allies. This convention will illustrate once again the power we create when we come together, reconnect and reaffirm our shared values and hope for a better future for everyone. We hope you will leave Fredericton with a renewed sense of urgency to ensure workers are at the forefront of positive change and ready for the important battles ahead.

YOUR POWER
YOUR FIGHT
YOUR UNION



2022

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

The National Union of Public and Employees (NUPGE) is a family of 13 Components. Taken together, we are one of the largest unions in Canada. Most of our 425,000 members work to deliver public services of every kind to the citizens of their home provinces. We also have a large and growing number of members who work for private businesses.

The office of the National Union of Public and General Employees is situated on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

We recognize and acknowledge the crimes that have been committed and the harm that has been done.

And, we dedicate ourselves, as a union, to moving forward in partnership with Indigenous Peoples in a spirit of reconciliation and striving for justice.

Bert Blundon, President

Jason MacLean, Secretary-Treasurer

Dear Friends:

We are pleased to submit this *Annual Report 2022*, which showcases the work of the National Union over the last 12 months.

This has been an incredible year, as we continue to struggle with the ongoing threat, and the long-term economic and political ramifications, of the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccines and mask mandates have given many a sense of freedom to resume living their lives. Although, as predicted, we are now seeing children with severe respiratory illnesses being admitted to hospitals in numbers that are overwhelming our already exhausted health care workers and increasing the strain on our health care system.

But, like every time before, our members are rising to the challenges—together.

It's that kind of solidarity that connects us as trade unionists. That makes an injury to one, an injury to all. That solidarity was never more present than on November 7, when public and private sector unions joined our friends in CUPE in Toronto for a historic press conference in the largest display of force in recent history.

While Doug Ford, Ontario's Premier, tried to bully 55,000 of the lowest-paid workers in the education sector into taking an insulting offer for a new collective agreement, the labour movement organized, mobilized, and roared. While he tried to strip away bargaining rights for 5 years by including a notwithstanding clause in the new legislation that would impose a wage settlement, parents, community members, civil rights defenders, teachers, and others gathered joined together in solidarity to say an emphatic NO.

As a national union, we pledged financial assistance to unions in Ontario to fight for a fair collective agreement for these vulnerable workers, and to stop the bullying. We were, and are, keenly aware that, if the bully isn't stopped, he looks for new targets. Our Component, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU/SEFPO), also represents education workers. And once done with us, who's next? No, we were not going to let anyone trample on our collective, constitutionally held rights under the Charter.

While this particular challenge may not be over, we clearly showed the Premier what could happen when union members work in solidarity. Our word stands, as we continue fighting for justice and fairness.

NUPGE fighting for workers

In 2022, we continued to focus on the well-being and rights of workers and the public. We continued to leverage our collective power to force governments to provide support and benefits to those impacted by the COVID health crisis. We continue to pressure governments and employers to increase their care and concern for the most vulnerable people in our communities, locally and globally, including children and our seniors.

The National Union and our members remain on the front line, not only in health care settings but in the public realm, advocating for workers' rights and public safety. By fighting for the rights of health care workers, we create a better environment to care for our loved ones. The leadership of NUPGE, nationally and in its Components, is continuing as always to make the safety and security of our members our main priority.

And it hasn't gone unnoticed.

This fall, we were honoured to announce that our union has gained 2 new member Components: the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals (MAHCP) and the Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan (HSAS)! We are pleased to continue to build strength in the health care sector across Canada at such an important time. These new partnerships will serve our members and the public well.

Strategic planning for the next 3 years

We gathered in June for our 2022 Triennial Convention in St. John's, Newfoundland, meeting in-person for the first time in a long time. A record number of member delegates, observers, and guests came together to celebrate our hard work and successes as a union and to plan for the challenges ahead.

Through videos, from speakers, and from speeches by members on the convention floor, we heard stories of struggle and resilience, of gratitude and grace, and of passion and compassion. We set policy and direction that reflected our values of equity, fairness, and justice.

We have a lot of work ahead of us to counter the lines coming from austerity-focused governments, corporate conservatives, and anti-labour employers. But coming out of this convention, every member knows that we have their back!

This report

This report details the work of the national office in 2022. You will find a list of the National Executive Board meetings, a report on our social media activities, and a review of our web stories. And you will find detailed information about all the other work we

have done. We have provided information about the various Component representatives' meetings, such as our advisory committees on the environment, women's issues and young workers.

We also have special committees that undertake work on child care, anti-racism, health and human resources, legal strategies and health care.

There are reports about meetings of our Component occupational groups, like Long-Term Care representatives, BC Ferry and Marine Workers' Union (BCFMWU), and Component Liquor Board Representatives.

This report also details our work in the broader labour movement, nationally and internationally, through the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and Public Services International (PSI), and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

We share information about our work with our allies, such as the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), Canadians for Tax Fairness, Climate Action Network, and the Canadian Health Coalition (CHC).

And there's information about the major issues the National Union has been working on, a truly impressive body of work:

- the crisis in provincial criminal justice systems
- presumptive legislation for occupational psychological/mental injury
- (opioid-related) poison-drug overdose crisis
- domestic violence
- long-term care—advocating for inclusion in the *Canada Health Act*
- income inequality
- the fight against privatization
- post-COVID—responding to austerity threats
- pensions
- global trade and investment deals, a threat to public services
- cyber security
- the global movement to suspend the World Trade Organization's agreement on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS)
- international solidarity

NUPGE staff

This report details the work of the national office in 2022. What it doesn't convey is the heart and soul of the people who got it all done. We have an impressive group of people

contributing every day to improve the lives of our members, and of the public, and we are proud their accomplishments. Under the leadership of Managing Director Len Bush and National Coordinator Brenda Hildahl, our NUPGE staff members continue to provide high-quality work, whether they're in their remote workplaces at home or at the office. They all have different roles and assignments, but they share a common dedication to the members of the National Union. We thank them for the outstanding work done this year in service to the hundreds of thousands of public sector and health care workers, and to all the many members who work in other areas.

The National Executive Board

As the Officers of NUPGE, we are blessed with a wonderful National Executive Board: dedicated, committed, and effective leaders in their own Components. They are also leaders with the vision and perspective to help guide our national and interprovincial work. We are grateful for their support, engagement, and commitment to build a better union, a stronger movement, and a fairer and more just world.

NUPGE members

I want to conclude by thanking our members, whose ongoing determination, commitment, and good humour helped us meet our challenges. They were there at every step, working hard, putting themselves on the line to serve the communities they love.

We know that great things can happen when we work together. We came together when COVID started, and almost 3 years later, we are stronger than ever. We continue to be vigilant—against COVID and the ongoing health care crisis, against austerity-focused governments, and against employers who want to trample on our constitutionally protected human rights. We will keep fighting for good jobs with good wages, safe working conditions, and decent pensions. We will continue to fight for better communities and workplaces, free from racism and intolerance. We will fight to make equality, fairness, and environmental sustainability part of any recovery.

Together, we will make our work and our lives better.

In solidarity,

Bert Blundon
President

NUPGE Executive Officers

President	Bert Blundon
Secretary-Treasurer	Jason MacLean

NUPGE Staff

Managing Director	Len Bush
National Coordinator	Brenda Hildahl
Executive Assistant to the Officers	Deb Sonogo
National Representatives	Jeryn Daly
	Deborah Duffy
	Nadia Ibrahim
	Andrew McNeill
	Anil Naidoo
	Keith Noseworthy
	Michael Temelini
Financial Administrator	Lynda McGuigan
Administrative Representatives	Theresa Clemen (Retired June 2022)
	Diane Fowles (Retired March 2022)
	Sandra Lea Megeney
	Laura Rashotte
	Sasha Saint-Aubin

Overview

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in Canada, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) and its Components have been working to protect and promote the interests of our over 425,000 members. This publication records the ways in which we connected with our members, our elected leadership, our allies, the government, and the public on issues that include (but are not limited to)

- health, safety, and wellness
- wages and benefits
- workload
- domestic violence
- precarious work
- austerity
- universal child care, and
- equality rights

With months of social distancing and lockdowns, we used our technology to reach each other like never before. The distance and isolation forced us to adapt to new ways of communicating. We made sure that our Components received as much support and information as they needed to represent the rights of our members. This collaboration and unity created a deeper connection. We shared a common challenge, a common reality, and as a result, our work made the National Union stronger.

NUPGE Working with Components

The National Union brings workers together from across the country to share information, develop common strategies, and build solidarity. Here are some of the ways we did that in 2022.

Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE)

The Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE) met by videoconference on March 9. ACE members shared updates on work being done in their Components. This includes member education and engagement, research, greening their offices, and Component committees or working groups. Participants also discussed the political dynamics and legislative and policy developments in their provinces and nationally.

Given Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the committee discussed the need to articulate the urgency of the transition to green energy, not caving to industry's calls to double down on fossil fuel extraction. This discussion helped to inform NUPGE's input to a related

statement by the Green Economy Network. Just Transition has been a priority area for the committee. In addition to work Components are doing at the provincial level, NUPGE has been pressing the federal government to implement Just Transition legislation.

ACE continues to engage in information sharing on collective agreement language related to the environment. At the meeting, ACE members provided updates and discussed the barriers to advancing environmental issues in bargaining. Representatives from the Labour Education Centre presented to ACE on the Working Green 2050 project, which supports union education and action on climate change.

ACE was invited to provide comments on the draft policy paper on the climate crisis. The work of this committee helped to inform the policy paper and resolutions for NUPGE's Triennial Convention, as well as NUPGE's work more broadly. Also, ACE gave input on both the format and content for NUPGE's environment conference, which took place in October.

Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI)

The Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI) met March 2–3, 2022. A key concern that for the committee has been following for several years is the issue of period poverty. NUPGE has produced a publication [Period Poverty in Canada](#). The publication explores how women in Canada continue to suffer the consequences of pay inequity, pay more for basic needs such as clothing and haircuts, and continue to be the primary caregivers for children, elders, and people with disabilities.

On top of these expenses, is the cost associated with having a menstrual cycle. For women, girls, gender-diverse people, and Indigenous people, who are living in poverty,



We choose to challenge budget cuts and inequality.
We choose to call out gender bias and the wage gap.
We choose to fight all forms of discrimination.
We choose a sheconomy that supports all women
in the post-COVID-19 world.



Together or apart,
wherever we are,
on International Women's Day,
and on every day of the year,
NUPGE will #ChooseToChallenge.



in domestic violence shelters, living with disabilities, or experiencing homelessness,¹ the cost of these products can mean that they can be forced to choose food over their health. Unions (including NUPGE), women's organizations, and organizations such as Tampon Tuesday have applied pressure on all levels of government to provide menstrual products free of charge in schools, shelters, and government buildings.

A [letter of appreciation](#) from Rohingya Women's Welfare Society (RWWS) regarding NUPGE's second contribution, which will help purchase necessary items such as hijabs, bourkas, undergarments, and clothes that were destroyed in 2 massive fires in the Cox's Bazar camp, was provided to the committee.

The committee discussed the alarming increase in the visibility, rapid growth and mobilization of the alt-right. The publication by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW), [The Rise of the Alt-right in Canada: A feminist analysis explores the issue from an intersectional feminist analysis](#), notes that the alt-right has misogynistic roots and groups such as "involuntary celibate" or "incel" target and terrorize mainly women. The paper notes that governments must treat misogyny, sexism, and racism as serious threats to public safety and national security.

The ACWI met on June 16, 2022, prior to the 2022 NUPGE Triennial Convention to discuss the NEB resolutions directly pertaining to women's issues: period poverty, intimate partner/domestic violence, solidarity with the Rohingya, and child care.

When the ACWI met October 13–14, 2022, one of the key issues was the theme of the February 2023 NUPGE women's conference. There was a consensus that the theme should be *Women in Leadership: We rise by lifting each other up*. The committee felt that there should be 2 key areas of discussion at the conference: women's leadership within the union movement, and women in politics at all levels of government.

The committee also discussed the growing concern regarding abortion rights in Canada after the overturning of *Roe v Wade* in the US and the resulting restrictive legislation in several states. Some of the response in Canada is that the federal government should introduce abortion rights legislation. The response from feminist and reproductive rights movement is a clear statement that the solution to protecting the right to abortion and reproductive rights is not legislation but focusing on enforcing and improving access.

¹ It's important to note that it's not just cisgender women and girls (i.e., those who were assigned the sex female at birth and identify as a women/girls) who menstruate. Nonbinary people and Two-Spirit people may also menstruate. Transgender people who have female sex organs and were assigned the sex female at birth may also menstruate. Essentially, any person who had female reproductive organs at birth may menstruate. For this reason, this document uses the term *people who menstruate*. In places, this document refers to women and girls

specifically because much of the research out there uses this language, or because it's also gender specific—including only cisgender females. This speaks to the need for improvements to the way studies are conducted.

Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues

The Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues (ACYWI) had a videoconference in 2022 on March 1. There were 8 participants from 7 Components.

Multiple Components are looking at expanding the equity seats they have on their executive boards, and this includes adding a seat for young workers. Some Components have resumed in-person meetings. Housing remains an issue for young workers in most provinces. Online initiatives continue to be popular. Some Components are in bargaining, or heading into bargaining, this year.

The ACYWI also discussed the upcoming NUPGE Young Workers' Conference, which was held in person on November 6–8, 2022.

Participants suggested the following topics be the priorities:

- Mental health
- Addressing and combatting racism
- Housing
- Social media training/engagement
- Access to participation in the workforce
- Access to universal child care

BC Ferry and Marine Workers' Union (BCFMWU)

In April 2022, the National Union contacted the Hon. Omar Alghabra, Minister of Transport, Government of Canada, and the NDP Transport Critic, Taylor Bachrach (MP, Skeena—Bulkley Valley), to meet with representatives of the BC Ferry and Marine Workers' Union (BCFMWU). This is part of our government relations strategy to raise awareness and concern about the corporate practice of importing foreign workers in the marine industry and firing existing workers.

This issue came to light in the March 2022 news that P&O Ferries (a British shipping company that operates ferries from the United Kingdom to Ireland, and to Continental Europe) suddenly made redundant or “fired” 800 of their workers. The existing crews were removed from P&O ships by an outside security firm in favour of busloads of exploited and lower-paid foreign crews. The P&O Ferries parent Company, DP World, operates in Canada, with terminal operations in Vancouver, Surrey, Prince Rupert, and Saint John. When the meeting was requested, there was as yet no action call to disrupt service at DP World facilities. But the BCFMWU was concerned that the same corporate practices could be coming to Canada. The National Union will continue to pursue this issue with government officials, and with component representatives to develop a strategy ensuring that this never happens in Canada.

Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat

The Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat (CHPS) has 2 scheduled meetings per year. The Secretariat met in May and October in the midst of a health care crisis. Over 70 participants were present through the two meetings with 10 Components and 3 CHPS allied constituent unions represented, along with NUPGE national staff. The first meeting was virtual with the second meeting being mostly in-person with a hybrid component. At the fall meeting of CHPS, NUPGE welcomed the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals (MAHCP) to NUPGE as they are now officially a NUPGE Component.

The health care crisis dominated the meetings with the consensus being that though the crisis was exacerbated by the pandemic, the labour shortages are also the result of poor health human resource planning and a failure by governments and employers to heed the warnings by unions and academics. Compounding the issues related to an aging workforce are an aging population and decades of austerity which has starved the system to the point of breaking.

NUPGE is increasingly focusing on the health human resources crisis in Canada and President Blundon talked about his meeting with Federal Health Minister Duclos on the issue. NUPGE continues to press for a pan-Canadian HHR strategy, but also is demanding that governments and employers do more to retain workers, including investing more in workers mental health and actively reducing workloads and stress so that health care workers are better supported.

Component updates are an ongoing feature of CHPS meetings and across the country the health care crisis is not abating. Working short has led to ever increasing workloads and the pandemic is still impacting the overburdened health care system. CHPS members were disappointed that the provinces and federal government have not concluded an agreement on new funding for health care and denounced the playing of politics while patients and workers suffer.

The ever present threat of health care privatization received a major boost during the pandemic as governments have been working with private health care clinics to deal with the surgical backlog. These arrangements are contrary to the spirit of the Canada Health Act, but Conservative governments seem willing to openly talk about privatization as the health care system is in crisis. These false solutions are a deep threat to our public health care system.

Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Representatives

Fighting privatization and health and safety were the main topics at 2 of the videoconferences the National Union organized for representatives from the liquor and cannabis sector. What has changed in 2022 is that, with the lifting of pandemic restrictions, there has been an increase in thefts by members of the public in some provinces. These thefts can be a threat to health and safety.

The National Union also held an emergency video conference for representatives from the liquor and cannabis sector to respond to the announcement in the Saskatchewan speech from the throne that the remaining publicly owned liquor stores in the province will be closed. In addition to the loss of almost 400 jobs, this will transfer revenue from liquor sales from the people of Saskatchewan to the large corporations that own private liquor stores. The videoconference provided a chance for Components to hear from SGEU/NUPGE about its fight-back campaign and to offer support.

Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee

The Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee (CBAC) met once virtually so far in 2022. The CBAC meetings bring together some of the most senior Component leadership and negotiators from our Components. Collectively, they provide an invaluable look at collective bargaining right across the country.

While the pandemic has been an important point of discussion the past couple of years, most Components are now bargaining in the context of moving forward. Almost all Components are facing provincial governments that are focused on austerity. Some provinces are arguing that they are in a significant deficit position because of spending during the COVID pandemic. However, work commissioned by the National Union with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has largely refuted this argument. CCPA Senior Economist David Macdonald spoke with the committee on his work, which demonstrates that most COVID-related spending was by the federal government. In fact, some provinces are actually in a stronger economic position post-COVID than they were in 2019.

Another interest of the CBAC is how to use bargaining to further union goals of anti-racism and decolonizing. Terri Monture, Indigenous activist and trade unionist, met with the committee to discuss ways to deepen our unions' commitment to justice and equality.

Corrections and Youth Facility Workers

The annual meeting of corrections and youth facility workers was held in Ottawa on September 22–23, 2022. This was the first in-person meeting since 2019, with 38 participants from 7 Components. There was a comprehensive and thorough discussion on the following topics, in which each Component provided an update on significant developments:



- raiding;
- campaigns against privatization;
- collective bargaining and grievance updates;
- administrative and disciplinary policies on segregation;
- the staffing-shortage crisis;
- recruitment, retention, and turnover in relation to low morale, burnout, and low wages.

An important part of the discussion focused on occupational health and safety issues. These included critical incidents and violence in the workplace, as well as established and new measures for correctional officers and youth services officers who develop mental injuries such as PTSD. Participants also discussed the relationship between mental health, opioids and other drugs. Violence in the workplace was of such particular concern to participants that they expressed an interest in a provincial and national campaign on the root causes of workplace violence against staff to be able to make recommendations to reduce this violence.

The working group meeting was so successful that representatives expressed an interest in having more meeting time to discuss topics of workplace violence and mental injury, including organizational and operational stressors.

Following the working group meeting September 25, once again many of the NUPGE working group members participated in the annual Canadian peace officers' memorial on Parliament Hill. The group assembled at the Supreme Court of Canada building, and then marched down Wellington Street.

NUPGE Environment Conference

The environment conference was held October 19 to 22. It brought activists from across the country to learn together, share their knowledge, and build relationships. The theme was *Climate Justice: Workers Taking Action*.



In organizing the conference, the National Union sought input from ACE members on both the format and topics. We heard that there was an appetite amongst members for educational opportunities, which informed the program. Throughout the conference, members participated in workshops, heard from guest speakers, and engaged in small-group discussions. 1.15

The topics of the sessions were:

- the basics of climate change, Just Transition, and what workers and unions can do;
- the role of Indigenous knowledge and leadership in climate action;
- environmental racism and what unions can do;
- lessons in coalition building; and
- NUPGE and Components taking action.

Members had an opportunity to share their own knowledge and experiences in the Q and A sessions, interactive workshops, and breakout discussions, in addition to learning from speakers and facilitators. They were able to meet and get to know one another during a reception. Members shared positive feedback about the conference and a desire to continue coordinating across the provinces in supporting our collective work to address the climate crisis.

Indigenous Issues Videoconference

On April 14, 2022, NUPGE held a videoconference of Indigenous Component representatives to discuss Indigenous issues. There were 12 participants from 5 Components.

Participants shared what their Components were doing in regard to Indigenous issues. Most Components don't know the demographics of their membership but are discussing ways that they can respectfully acquire this information. Tangentially to this point, most Components don't have a committee or working group specifically for Indigenous issues, but most have a committee that focuses on equality, human rights, and anti-racism.

Education on Indigenous history and contemporary issues for non-Indigenous people was a commonality among several Components. There is also a desire to see non-Indigenous members better understand Indigenous culture and customs. Some participants feel frustrated when non-Indigenous members are constantly asking them for a land acknowledgment they can copy/paste for their meetings, and when asked how to treat an Elder with respect at events.

NUPGE is creating several educational resources about Indigenous issues. During the videoconference, there were requests to ensure that NUPGE is working with Indigenous groups, or to consider hiring an Indigenous Liaison or Education Officer. It is the preference of NUPGE and the participants that a permanent Indigenous Issues committee be formed. A resolution to form the committee was presented at NUPGE's convention as part of a policy paper called *Justice for Indigenous Peoples*.

Leadership Development School

The National Union's 23rd Leadership Development School took place August 13–19, 2022, at the Horseshoe Resort near Barrie, Ontario. This was the first in-person Leadership Development School since before the COVID-19 pandemic. 21 people from 7 Components and one international guest participated.

Elaine Bernard, the former executive director of the Harvard University Labor and Worklife Program, delivered the core program. Other sessions looked at how to strengthen the labour movement. Jason MacLean delivered one on racism in Canada and what unions can do. Former NUPGE president Larry Brown presented on accountability and good governance in unions. There were also sessions on some issues NUPGE members are facing, like the housing crisis, the overdose crisis, and climate change.

Legal Strategies Component Coordinating Committee

With in-house representatives and external counsel present, these meetings enjoy wide participation from Components. Participants provide updates from their provinces and discuss and share analyses on issues and cases that are of mutual interest across the country. Andrew Astritis of RavenLaw, legal counsel to NUPGE, is present at these meetings and often provides analysis. The committee met twice this year by videoconference. Topics of focus at recent meetings have included cross-country issues, COVID-19 vaccine mandates, legal challenges to them, and the duty of fair representation. The committee has also monitored developments related to working from home. The committee has heard updates and analysis on shifts at the Supreme Court of Canada.

Participants provided updates on legal challenges to wage-restraint legislation in Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Ontario. At the November meeting, there was a discussion on the notwithstanding clause in the context of Bill 28 in Ontario. There were reports on the Vancouver Shipyards case, which was a win for picketing rights, and a recent Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario decision that found the tribunal has concurrent jurisdiction with labour arbitrators. The committee has been monitoring Bill 32 in Alberta, which is widely seen as a step towards *right to work*. Participants also reported on other developments of note, including the long-awaited move to a single-step certification process in BC, and Saskatchewan's new requirement that all employers are to have a workplace violence policy.

National Executive Board Meetings

- Meeting 319—March 21 to 22, 2022, Vancouver
- Meeting 320—April 13, 2022, Videoconference
- Meeting 321—June 16, 2022, St. John's

Scholarships

The National Union awards 9 scholarships in the amount of 2,500 each year. All applicants must provide an essay and must be admitted to a Canadian, public, post-secondary institution.

Except for applicants for the 2 Young Worker Scholarships who may apply as members, all scholarships are available to the children/grandchildren and foster children/grandchildren or a legal ward of one our members and/or retirees of our Components or of a Component's affiliate.

Applicants must not have earned any post-secondary credits and must be starting their first year of a post-secondary program on a full-time basis with the further exception of applicants for the Young Worker Scholarships.



Applicants for these scholarships may apply if they currently enrolled or have previous received post-secondary credits but they must be under the age of 30 at the time of the scholarship cutoff date.

The following were awarded in November 2022:

Brian Fudge Memorial Scholarship—OPSEU/SEFPO, Melissa Trinh
Scholarship for Black Students—MGEU, Eliana Legesse
Scholarship for Indigenous Students—HSABC, Carmen Shea
Scholarship for LGBTQ2 Students—BCGEU, Maya Taylor
Scholarship for Students of Colour—NSGEU, Malaya Douglas
Terry Fox Memorial Scholarship—OPSEU/SEFPO, Sofia Begg
Tommy Douglas Scholarship—NSGEU, Lareina Shen
Young Worker Scholarships—BCGEU, Sarah Graham, and MGEU—Natalie Kathler

NUPGE Young Workers' Conference

Topics for the conference were discussed at meetings of the Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues (ACYWI). All topics were chosen based on feedback from the ACYWI.



Participants had a chance to meet informally at the reception held on November 6. Most participants did not know each other outside of their Components. There was a good mix of experienced activists, participants who hold elected positions, and new activists (for many of them, this conference was their first union event).

The conference was opened and closed by Grandmother Irene Compton. The opening was performed in person and the closing over Zoom.

On November 7, participants heard presentations on workplace mental health, future-proofing unions (legal strategies and accountability on equity), and contemporary Canadian issues. Each presentation included a Q and A or a workshop. After the official end of the first day, most participants chose to participate in the Notwithstanding Ford Emergency Rally hosted by Community Solidarity Ottawa. The rally had around 150 participants and heard speeches from labour activists across the country, including NUPGE's Secretary-Treasurer, Jason MacLean.

On November 8, participants heard presentations on fighting for universal child care in Canada, Reconciliation, and affordable housing. Each presentation included a Q and A session.

Overall, feedback from the participants via an evaluation survey was very positive. All speakers were well received, with Darcel Bullen receiving high scores, and Dr. Pam Palmater receiving perfect scores from all evaluations. The majority of participants wanted a longer conference with more time for facilitated discussions among participants and with break-out sessions. They also wanted more structured social time and networking opportunities. There were also several requests to make the content less Ontario-centric.

Participants also provided feedback on what they wanted to see from NUPGE regarding young workers. The majority of participants want more young worker conferences, events, and online spaces. There were several suggestions about an online forum or communications tool that would let young workers keep in touch between in-person events.

Topics of interest included

- political education
- mental health and wellness
- problem solving/conflict resolution
- the importance of unions (targeted at younger generations)
- precarious work.

They also wanted to know more about lobbying the federal government on issues like health care, anti-racism, the cost of living and issues facing people with disabilities.

Special Committees

Child Care

This committee is chaired by Stephanie Smith, President of the BCGEU/NUPGE. The special committee met by videoconference on March 24. Larry Brown thanked the special committee for their work over the last 2 years. With their guidance, we were able to enhance our advocacy, increase pressure on governments, and support Components by sharing information and resources.



Participants shared updates from their provinces, including on the federal-provincial/territorial child care agreements. Access to, and affordability of, child care continue to be major challenges, though there is hope that the agreements will help. There is a high level of burnout among the child care workforce. The pandemic has exacerbated an existing recruitment and retention problem. Governments must ensure compensation and working conditions are improved and develop strategies to expand the workforce, as NUPGE has emphasized in letters to the federal minister.

The committee raised concerns about whether public funds are going to for-profit providers and discussed the importance of building capacity in the public and non-profit sectors for expanding the number of child care spaces. NUPGE raised this issue in its pre-budget submission to the federal government. The committee has discussed the importance of working with allies. Several Components are involved in provincial child care advocacy associations. NUPGE provided updates on its participation in the CLC Child Care Working Group and Child Care Now.

At the March meeting, it was agreed that the committee move to meeting on an as-needed basis, while NUPGE continues to play its role in facilitating information sharing and coordinating advocacy.

The special committee was reconvened for a short videoconference on October 27. It focused on sharing information and getting the committee's input on some time-sensitive advocacy opportunities, including the Day of Action.

Health Human Resources Working Group

The Health Human Resources Working Group met on March 28–29, 2022. The meeting was an important opportunity to discuss the health human resources (HHR) crisis in Canada. All Components were represented except for HSAA, whose attendance would have conflicted with bargaining.

The meeting featured Dr. Ivy Bourgeault from the University of Ottawa, who is the lead on the Canadian Health Workforce Network and has been researching HHR issues for many years. The core of the meeting was presenting Component reports and the sharing of Component experience and common concerns across the country. The meeting reviewed the key aspects of the labour shortages; labour shortages proved to be widespread and relentless, with few solutions on the horizon. The group also looked at recruitment, training, and retention strategies and were similarly disappointed that more was not being done, both to encourage new workers into these fields, but also to hang on to existing members.

While we know there are labour shortages across many sectors of the economy, health care is a sector that needs immediate attention. Quality health care must be provided by a highly trained workforce and is labour intensive. A shortage of workers directly impacts health care outcomes. An aging workforce and an aging population mean that increased demand for health care will be compounded by large numbers of workers at or nearing retirement. Urgent steps are needed to avoid major harm to our health care system. This meeting explored how the pandemic exposed the problems with how Canada's health care workforce is managed and showed that both patients and workers are paying the price. NUPGE will continue to work to pressure governments and employers to address the health human resources crisis and to understand that critical shortages in allied health professionals damage the quality and timeliness of care that can be provided.

NUPGE will continue to work to pressure governments and employers to address the HHR crisis. Governments and employers need to understand that critical shortages in specialized allied health professionals damage the quality and affect the timeliness of care that can be provided.

In October, NUPGE President Bert Blundon met with the Federal Minister of Health, Duclos, and the Federal Minister of Seniors, Khera, sending a strong message about the importance of federal engagement in the HHR crisis. This meeting was led by the CLC and included CLC President Bea Bruske, officers, staff, and members of the executive committee. President Blundon spoke about home care and long-term care concerns, as well as the urgent need for a pan-Canadian human resources strategy for health professionals. It was important for these ministers to hear directly from labour leaders and to understand that health care workers are suffering alongside their patients due to the ongoing labour shortages

NUPGE in the Broader Labour Movement

Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

Through their membership in a National Union Component, members are also affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The CLC is the largest labour central in Canada and represents 3.3 million workers.

NUPGE participates in the various committees and working groups of the CLC. We also play a significant role in their triennial constitutional convention.

The leadership at the CLC has moved quickly to reconstitute its committees and embark on some important actions since taking office in 2021. CLC committees are disbanded after each convention and then start anew shortly afterward.

CLC Disability Rights Working Group

At this working group, remote work was a large part of the discussion. The main takeaway was that the choice to work remotely must come from the employee. In many ways, it is easier and safer for workers with disabilities to work remotely. Many workers have reported that member-on-member issues and bullying from managers decreased significantly since working from home. However, if an employee has a disability, it should not be an excuse to force that employee to work remotely. For example, because it will save the employer money by not having to renovate the workplace if the employee that requires a wheelchair works from home.

A blended model of videoconference and in-person meetings is preferable as long as COVID is a significant risk, because many workers who are immunocompromised can stay safe. Several participants noted that their offices had low cases of COVID while working remotely, but that most people contracted it once they returned to working in the office. Instead of allowing a return to normal, we must advocate for inclusion, as issues with transportation and accessibility existed prior to the pandemic.

Rabia Khedra, National Director for Disability Without Poverty Network (DWPN), presented on the topic of [Bill C-22](#). DWPN is pushing to get the bill passed by the end of the year. There was some discussion around whether it would be beneficial for the bill to include a minimum amount of monetary support. DWPN's stance is that trying to attach a minimum amount will hold up the vote. Further, a minimum may become a maximum and not keep up with inflation over the years. There was also discussion around the concern that Bill C-22 will be used as an excuse to roll back other social services, or that employers may use it as an excuse to pay workers with disabilities less. DWPN's position is that this bill represents an important precedent for people with disabilities who are unable to work, but that we must of course continue to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities who can work. [Inclusion Canada](#) has also been advocating for Bill C-22 without any claw backs.

CLC Education Advisory Committee Meeting

At the is meeting much of the discussion focused on hybrid teaching. There are both advantages and drawbacks to online teaching and hybrid teaching. Online and hybrid teaching the advantages of efficiency and reach (geography and travel already creates barriers for participants prior to the pandemic). They can also be used even when COVID protocols, such as masking, limits on group gatherings, and travel restrictions, are enforced again. Online teaching allows for simultaneous interpretation and other tools to be used that assist people with disabilities. The carbon and pollution generated by traveling for in-person classes is greatly reduced by online learning.

Some drawbacks to online and hybrid teaching include the lack of socializing and the inability to make eye contact and read body language. There are some technological barriers for participants and facilitators (headsets with microphones are key to ensuring everyone can be heard). A potential solution to the technological barriers is to ask participants on their registration form about their accessibility needs and what equipment they use (e.g., some browsers are incompatible with course material).

Some participants voiced frustration with students turning their cameras off (and potentially leaving) or doing other work while in training. Others raised the point that students do other work and leave early during in-person training as well. The solution should be that students who aren't participating, or who leave early, should be reported to their leadership. Another point raised as a drawback to online and hybrid teaching was that some topics aren't safe to teach online, as participants can get volatile and feel empowered to say things from behind a screen that they wouldn't say in person. The flip side to that point is that marginalized groups can speak behind the scenes to prepare and support each other ahead of time for what they're going to say.

The main takeaway is that content is key. If the content is not relevant and engaging, no in-person or online tools will improve retention rates. It was also pointed out that hybrid teaching doesn't need to mean online and in-person training simultaneously: the online and in-person sessions can run on different days. Additionally, for hybrid training sessions that do run simultaneously, it was recommended to have an in-person and an online facilitator to separately manage both groups of students.

CLC Environment Advisory Committee

The committee met 3 times this year. Climate change and Just Transition have been identified as priorities of the CLC. At these meetings, participants discuss issues of national and international importance, with CLC representatives providing updates on its work and the committee providing input. Participants also report on the work affiliates are doing on environment and climate change.

At the national level, Just Transition and the development of federal Just Transition legislation have been key topics of focus this year. At these meetings, there have also been updates, discussions, and strategizing around the Conference of the Parties (COP), the UN climate change summit. There were presentations from allies, like the Green Economy Network and Labour Education Centre. Finally, affiliate representatives shared updates on their work and priorities.

CLC Human Rights Advisory Committee

Updates were given from the following working groups: Indigenous Rights, Workers of Colour, Disability Rights, and Solidarity and Pride.

The CLC has developed a presentation, *The Freedom Convey and the Rise of the Right*, as part of the work they are doing to combat hate. The workshop is available for affiliates to take and make their own. It is meant for leadership and activists to understand the current context and landscape we find ourselves in when it comes to the rise of the right and hate in Canada and to explore how to build member engagement and a sense of belonging. Requests for the workshop can be sent to education@clcctc.ca.

The proposed convention agenda and themes are going to Executive Council and the Canadian Council soon for approval. Instead of having daily themes, the plan is to assign a theme to every half-day, allowing for more specifics. The care economy and Truth and Reconciliation are 2 proposed themes. Instead of policy papers, there will be action plans.

There will be a Human Rights Forum at the upcoming CLC convention, which is starting to be planned now. The hope is to highlight stories of workers' organizing and victories, and to mainstream intersectionality throughout the convention. Members are welcome to submit suggestions to human-rights@clcctc.ca. Members had a discussion on ideas for the Human Rights Forum.

CLC Indigenous Rights Working Group

The CLC is also continuing to push for government to implement all of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. A number of organizations have been closely reporting on the government's progress in implementing these, including the Yellowhead Institute, NAP Progress Report, and CBC's Beyond 94.

Members had a discussion on land acknowledgments. The general sentiment is that it still feels like box checking and lacks a deeper understanding of Reconciliation. Translating the depth of the teachings into a land acknowledgment is excruciating—how do you remedy not having the teachings of the land? Mispronunciation of Indigenous words is common and disrespectful. Non-Indigenous people need to be doing the work to learn about, write, and perform land acknowledgments.

The following are ideas some unions are implementing regarding land acknowledgments:

- rewriting their existing land acknowledgment,
- working to put land acknowledgments into collective agreements,
- asking board members to volunteer to do land acknowledgments
- working through any discomfort that arises,
- implementing a land acknowledgment on letterhead, and
- installing and acknowledgment plaques for each regional building.

CUPE is working on a process-oriented guide for land acknowledgments, with the aim of releasing it in 2023. They will circulate it to the working group once it is ready. The CLC Lobby Day will be taking place in February 2023. It has also been confirmed that there will be an Indigenous Lobby Day in the fall of 2023, which will allow for enough lead time to build support from affiliates for sending delegates, as well as to firm up relationships with national Indigenous organizations.

CLC Legal Challenges Coordinating Committee

Former president Larry Brown has co-chaired the CLC's Legal Challenges Coordinating Committee. The CLC committee works to build cooperation and coordination among labour allies about taking labour rights' legal challenges forward. At the committee, affiliates also share updates on important cases and decisions that impact workers and unions, similar to the reporting in NUPGE's own Legal Strategies Component Coordinating Committee.

The October meeting was Brown's final meeting as co-chair. CLC President Bea Bruske thanked him for his years of service and thoughtful contribution to the committee.

CLC Solidarity and Pride Working Group

2 meetings of the CLC Solidarity and Pride Working group were held in 2022 (April 13 and October 4). The CLC Human Rights Department is working through updating resources.

To prepare for the ILGA World Conference, the working group discussed what challenges do young queer workers face (at work, within unions, in the labour movement), what equity structures exist within their local/union/labour council/federation, and how unions can better engage and empower young 2SLGBTQIA+ workers. The largest ever Canadian union delegation attended the conference with about 40 delegates in attendance from various unions and locals across Canada.

The final report and recommendations from the Employment Equity Act Review Task Force have not yet come out. But there was a broad consensus that 2SLGBTQIA+ be recognized as an equity-seeking group. To prepare for the ILGA World Conference, the working group discussed what challenges young queer workers face (at work, within unions, and in the labour movement). The group questioned what equity structures exist within their local/union/labour council/federation, and how unions can better engage and empower young 2SLGBTQIA+ workers. The largest-ever Canadian union delegation attended the conference, with about 40 delegates in attendance from various unions and locals across Canada.

Montreal Pride was canceled for the first time due to security issues. North Bay Pride also received threats, so unions went out in full force to support them. A representative from the CLC attended the Global Black Pride Conference in July 2022. At the conference, there were great discussions on the unique experiences of Black folks in 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, of anti-Black racism and homophobia and transphobia. There is also a coordinated backlash of the alt right against 2SLGBTQIA+ communities—at Pride events, about legislative changes (i.e., Ontario’s Human Rights Code), and sex education in schools. The alt right is co-opting social justice slogans and engaging people through the Internet with a broader reach than ever before. Labour and 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations can work together to support capacity building, providing subject matter expertise, political action, and education. Unions can continue bargaining for gender-affirming health care, paid time off to access that care, and demanding employers stop defining family for things like bereavement and care leaves.

Frontlines Delegation to Colombia

This summer, leaders from the CLC, CUPW, CUPE, NUPGE, and PSAC participated in the Frontlines delegation to Colombia. Frontlines is an initiative in which Canadian public sector unions, since 2004, have engaged in solidarity exchanges with Colombian unions, social movements, and human rights defenders. Jason MacLean, Secretary-Treasurer, and Trevor King, Secretary-Treasurer of NAPE, participated in this year's delegation.

For years, trade unionists and human rights and land defenders have been subjected to attacks and repression. In June, for the first time, Colombians successfully elected a progressive government, led by President Gustavo Petro and Vice-President Francia Marquez. This offered a sense of hope for the future, given decades of violence and impunity, and it was a critical time to show solidarity. The delegation met with labour and community leaders, including CAJAR, the Colombian lawyers' collective that NUPGE has supported. Importantly, the delegation went to rural communities where Colombia's Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities are severely impacted by –in solidarity with our allies in Colombia and support their struggles, including to achieve justice for victims of state violence and advance labour and social reforms.

NUPGE Working with Our Allies

Canadian Health Coalition

NUPGE works with the Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) to protect, strengthen, and preserve our public health care system. The Canadian Health Coalition has been doing this work for over 40 years and brings together a diverse group of labour and community organizations committed to our public health care system.

The pandemic has exposed some serious problems that need to be addressed, and the CHC is concerned about the growing threats of privatization. New opportunities are also apparent when we note that there will be federal acts introduced for LTC and pharmacare in the next 3 to 4 years.

The pandemic has also caused great harm to health care workers and exacerbated the health human resource crisis. Virtual health care is also a critical issue, as private corporations have invested heavily in this largely unregulated sphere of health care. NUPGE sits on the board of the CHC and interacts with provincial health coalitions through it. It is critical that there be good communication across the many groups who work on health care. Coordination with political parties will also be key, because the Supply and Confidence Agreement between the Liberals and NDP contains many references to health care but with few details. It is incumbent on health care advocates to ensure that these initiatives do not allow for further privatization of our health care system.

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Canadians for Tax Fairness

Those pushing for cuts to public services will always try and justify their position by saying there is no alternative, but that's not true. Campaigns for tax fairness have very shown is that there is an alternative to austerity—but it requires governments with the backbone needed to ensure that large corporations and the wealthy pay their share. Tax fairness continues to be a priority for the National Union's. Our work on tax fairness includes advocating for fair taxation measures and supporting allies.

A key ally in the National Union's work on tax fairness is [Canadians for Tax Fairness](#) (C4TF) and the National Union has strongly supported its work. In addition to the impact that its own advocacy work has, C4TF has been an invaluable resource for unions and other organizations concerned about tax fairness. The National Union has made use of research by C4TF when pushing for measures to make the tax system fairer. This includes our [submission to the federal government's consultation for the 2022 federal budget](#) call for a publicly accessible registry showing who controls companies registered in Canada (the beneficial owners).

Child Care Now

NUPGE is a member of Child Care Now, the national child care advocacy organization. Child Care Now advocates for a publicly funded, inclusive, quality, and non-profit child care system. This year, Child Care Now has been monitoring the implementation of the federal-provincial/territorial child care agreements and pressuring governments to address gaps and deliver on their commitments. Child Care Now has also been supporting the creation of more formal provincial advocacy coalitions where they don't already exist. There are new provincial chapters of Child Care Now in Alberta, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick.



This fall, Child Care Now convened a national meeting to discuss issues with the implementation of a Canada-wide system. These are primarily governments' failure to address the workforce crisis and improve access to affordable, high-quality child care, which failure threatens to undermine the entire project. This led to the organizing of a National Day of Action on Early Learning and Child Care on November 30. Child Care Now coordinated the Day of Action, facilitating information-sharing, communications, and other national actions, with provincial coalitions leading on local actions and demands. NUPGE participated in the national coordinating committee for the Day of Action.

Climate Action Network

At the international level, CAN-Rac has done analysis on, and responded to, 2 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports released this year. This fall, COP27 was a major focus. CAN-Rac provided briefings, analysis, and logistics support to member organizations, and participated on the ground in Egypt.

Education for All

The Education for All (E4A) campaign is a joint initiative of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), and NUPGE. Together, our combined memberships of more than 1 million students and workers are putting forward a vision of a more affordable, accessible, high-quality, publicly funded post-secondary education system in Canada—a system that is ready to take on the challenges of today and tomorrow.

This spring, E4A released new research on the rising cost of post-secondary education in Canada. It showed that, since the 1990s, the cost of tuition has been rising faster than the cost of other goods, including housing and transportation. The data showed that households are spending a larger proportion of their income on post-secondary

education, with lower-income households being affected the most. This new research coincided with the tabling of a federal private member's bill that would provide for a dedicated funding transfer for post-secondary education. E4A issued a joint press release in support of the bill and developed an online letter-writing tool for individuals to take action. NUPGE also released a statement welcoming the bill.

Green Economy Network

The Green Economy Network (GEN) is a coalition of labour, environmental, and social justice organizations working to build a green economy in Canada. Through GEN, member organizations share updates on their work and coordinate where appropriate.

This year, GEN has updated its fact sheets on 3 pillar areas: public transit, renewable energy, and greener buildings. GEN is also looking at ways to engage on these issues with a wider audience and to build on past lobbying efforts. Of note, GEN weighed in on the debate on high energy prices and the push from industry to ramp up fossil fuel production. GEN released a statement calling on the federal government to instead double down on its emissions reduction commitments, invest in a Just Transition for workers and communities, and invest in public services. GEN has also facilitated discussion and strategizing on Just Transition, including the development of federal legislation. GEN also organized a webinar on COP27 this fall.

International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group

The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG) is a national coalition of civil society organizations that works to defend civil liberties and human rights. The coalition brings together NGOs, unions, faith groups, human rights groups, and others. ICLMG produces educational materials, writes submissions to government, meets with MPs and government officials, engages in actions and campaigns, and facilitates coordination amongst coalition members.

ICLMG has been doing work on areas such as

- the dangers of facial recognition technologies,
- reforming Canada's extradition laws,
- the impact of anti-terrorism laws,
- Canada Revenue Agency's targeting of Muslim charities,
- The importance of encryption tools, privacy and surveillance issues, and
- the government's proposed online harms legislation.

This year, ICLMG celebrated its 20th anniversary. It highlighted 2 decades of advocacy for civil liberties and human rights in the context of the so-called War on Terror by organizing a panel on the topic.

Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), Advisory Committee—National Action Plan on Mental Health and Criminal Justice

The MHCC is developing and implementing a National Action Plan (NAP on mental health and criminal justice “to recognize and address the mental health needs of people who come into contact with the criminal justice system.” This includes identifying the needs and considerations of priority populations (e.g., Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, and women, and working to mitigate the impacts of colonialism, racism, and other forms of oppression.

To assist in the development and implementation of an NAP, the MHCC invited NUPGE to join with 21 experts on a Development Advisory Committee to give strategic advice, opinion, feedback, and to provide expertise to MHCC and “ultimately cocreate” the action plan.

There were 4 videoconference meetings in 2022: January 26, (the inaugural meeting, April 11, September 26, and November 1. Subsequent meetings will be held bi-monthly until winter 2023.

The first meeting allowed committee members to introduce themselves, review the terms of reference and guiding principles, and share priorities. At the subsequent meetings, participants reviewed and discussed the proposed vision statement of the NAP, its Mission, Guiding Principles, and continued to work on the action plan. NUPGE emphasized key points raised in NUPGE research documents on the crisis of overcrowding, occupational violence, and understaffing in provincial corrections, and the need to address mental injury among justice workers.

NUPGE will continue to participate in meetings of the development advisory committee to ensure that the action plan implements the concerns of our members working in the justice system.

Trade Justice Network, and Trade and Investment Research Project

To share research and to promote collective action on the impact of global trade and investor rights agreements on our economic and democratic institutions, the National Union continues to work in solidarity with labour and civil society allies in regular meetings. To this end, NUPGE is engaged with 2 coalitions: the Trade and Investment Research Project (TIRP), and the Trade Justice Network (TJN). The primary focus of TIRP is to share information and research, and the aim of the TJN is action.

The National Union’s involvement in these important coalition groups allows us to join forces with allies to defend the public interest against expanding corporate rights,

power, and influence. The National Union believes these agreements remove public safeguards and threaten public safety. They also erode quality public services through specific mechanisms designed to lock in liberalization and privatization.

In 2022, both coalitions raised awareness and provided critical intelligence about several global investment regimes, including ones to which the Government of Canada is a party, for example:

- Canada-US-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA)
- Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, formerly TPP
- Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)
- World Trade Organization (WTO).

With CUSMA, there was a continuing close examination in 2022 of certain complaints falling under the enforceable dispute settlement mechanisms in the agreement:

- US dispute with Mexico regarding labour reform efforts targeting violations of workers' rights to organize and collectively bargain.
- Mexico's complaints against the US regarding the rights of migrant labourers. (discrimination and sexual harassment in temporary work programs for migrants).
- Mexico's dispute with the US over differing interpretations of rules of origin for automotive vehicles.
- The ruling against Canada on tariff-rate quotas for dairy products.
- Canada's dispute with the US with respect to tariffs on solar products from Canada.

Regarding the WTO, there was continued discussion in 2022 on issues such as whether the WTO can be reformed to ensure fair trade between different countries at various stages of development, and to implement the socio-ecological transformation that is urgently needed in the face of various environmental and social crises.

Also discussed was the WTO's TRIPS waiver (explained elsewhere in this report).

With our TIRP and TJN allies, in 2022, the National Union continues to monitor the situation in ongoing negotiations for new trade and investment regimes, for example:

- The United Kingdom's ongoing post-Brexit negotiations over trade and investment agreements, namely UK-Canada trade relations, and UK accession negotiations with CPTPP member states.
- The Canada-Indonesia negotiations towards a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

Trade Unions for Energy Democracy

NUPGE participates in Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED). TUED is a global, multisector initiative that aims to advance democratic direction and control of energy in a way that promotes solutions to the climate crisis, energy poverty, the degradation of both land and people, and responds to the attacks on workers' rights and protections.

TUED produces research and hosts forums to discuss key issues and highlight experiences around the world. Notably, TUED played a convening role in the drafting of the Trade Union Program for a Public, Low-Carbon Energy Future, which NUPGE endorsed last year. In October, leaders from trade unions, Global Union Federations, and allied organizations gathered in Nairobi to launch TUED South. This new initiative will promote a public approach to Just Transition, similar to what is outlined in the Trade Union Program, but in the Global South, specifically.

Major Issues (NUPGE and the Future)

Anti-privatization

In February, the National Union released an [updated version of its profile of Medavie](#). Medavie is playing a growing role in the privatization of health care services in 6 provinces. The National Union is also continuing to promote a report, [Virtual Health Care Privatization](#), we released last year, including sharing it with allies. This report looked at how the introduction of new technology is being used to privatize a growing portion of our health care system.

There were 2 videoconferences held for Component researchers, communications staff, and campaigners working to fight privatization. These meetings included presentations on issues related to privatization such as work NUPGE sponsored on provincial government finances and NAPE's campaign against privatization in Newfoundland and Labrador. Participants also discussed emerging threats and what is being done to fight privatization.

Bringing Long-Term Care under the Canada Health Act

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the failure of Canada's Long-Term Care (LTC) sector.

Over 15,800 residents died during the first waves of the pandemic, an Canada has the world's highest



percentage of pandemic deaths in LTC. Over 2 years into the pandemic, and after the terrible failures we have witnessed in LTC, Canada is still not adequately protecting our most vulnerable elderly and infirm. NUPGE has been pressing governments to act to ensure better care for LTC residents and to address the stark failure of LTC in Canada.

NUPGE has been at the forefront of calling for changes in LTC and has been pressing the federal government to bring LTC under the *Canada Health Act* (CHA).

Throughout the pandemic, NUPGE has been consistent in our call for reform of LTC and its inclusion under the CHA. NUPGE even provided the federal government with polling showing that Canadians overwhelmingly supported bringing LTC under the public health care system. We have worked with allies, including the Canadian Health Coalition, and within organized labour and the Canadian Labour Congress to champion these changes. NUPGE, in all our correspondence with the Prime Minister and federal Health Minister on LTC and health care, has continued to press the government to act.

NUPGE has also been concerned that the federal government promises of a Safe Long-Term Care Act and national standards are proving hollow.

In May, we sent a letter to Health Minister Duclos demanding he step in to launch a new process to develop LTC standards that are comprehensive, effective, and enforceable. This was after NUPGE analyzed the proposed LTC standards that were produced by the Health Standards Organization (HSO).

The HSO's draft standards are vague and do not even guarantee minimum hours of care for LTC patients. NUPGE called on Minister Duclos to take over the process of developing the LTC standards, because the HSO is a private organization. NUPGE believes the standards for LTC must be the responsibility of governments to create, monitor, and enforce.

We are at a critical moment in LTC reform in Canada. Yes, provincial governments have promised better pay for workers and investments in LTC facilities. Unfortunately, if the sector is not brought under the *Canada Health Act*, and brought into our public health system, most of these needed investments will go towards increasing the profits of private corporations.

With the number of beds needed expected to double by 2035, we need major investment by governments. Without that public investment and strong regulations, we will continue to see the proliferation of for-profit care. If that is allowed to happen, it means more for-profit facilities where the owners put profit ahead of care. NUPGE remains committed to positive reform of our LTC sector, including bringing LTC under the *Canada Health Act*.

Fighting privatization of paid plasma

In August, a report was leaked showing that the Canadian Blood Services were on the verge of signing a major contract to allow a private corporation to collect paid plasma in Canada. NUPGE has long worked with Components and allies to oppose the expansion of paid plasma in Canada. NUPGE opposes paid plasma because it is a safety and security risk to our blood and plasma supply and because it is a large-scale privatization and commodification of health care in Canada.



Even before the agreement was announced, NUPGE joined Components in denouncing the impending deal. When the deal was officially confirmed in September, plans were in motion to maintain pressure on the CBS board, executives and the health ministers who appoint the CBS board. Letters and web stories were circulated and meetings were held to plan actions.

OPSEU/SEFPO lead a December 1 information picket during the CBS open board meeting in Ottawa. NUPGE supported this event with Jason MacLean, NUPGE Secretary-Treasurer, serving as Emcee. Over 30 people attended with representatives from NUPGE Components and allies. OPSEU/SEFPO, NSGEU and HSAA presented, as did allies such as BloodWatch, the Canadian Labour Congress, CUPE, the Canadian Health Coalition, the Ottawa Health Coalition and others.

There were solidarity events in Halifax and Edmonton, and the event was followed up by a press conference at the Ontario Legislature with OPSEU/SEFPO, BloodWatch and the Ontario NDP denouncing the Ford government's failure to reject paid plasma.

NUPGE is joining in solidarity against this deal and demanding the deal be cancelled. Furthermore, the CBS board and CEO have breached the public trust and violated the CBS mandate to support voluntary donation. NUPGE joins OPSEU/SEFPO and others calling for the removal of the CBS board and senior leadership. NUPGE supports the expansion of voluntary plasma collection in Canada and believes this is the solution to plasma shortages.

This fight will be ongoing and what is at risk is not less than the future of our public blood and plasma supply. Paying for blood and tissue is illegal in Canada, but plasma was not included in the ban. Expanding paid plasma will undermine voluntary collection in Canada and violates the ban on paid plasma in BC and Ontario. This must be stopped and there is ongoing collaboration to continue the fight against paid plasma.

Communications Review and Rebrand

COVID-19 has shown us how important it is to communicate regularly with our members, with our provincial Components leaders and staff, and with the public. Without the ability to meet in person, online communication has become essential. The National Union does great work—great campaigns, solid research—but if it doesn't reach our audience, it doesn't have the impact it could.



The National Executive Board recognized this and the need for NUPGE to be seen and valued as an important organization in discussions about public policy. To achieve that, NUPGE needs to build a stronger presence online, stronger relationships with journalists, and with government representatives. To reach those goals, the National Union issued a Request for Proposals for a major communications review.

The NOW Group and Metric were awarded the contract and have been working diligently on many aspects of the communications review and union rebranding. Meetings have taken place with NUPGE and Component staff to review goals, methods, and tools being used for communications and to promote the union. Focus groups have been held with members, and an ad hoc reference group has been created to work with the agency teams.

From those meetings and discussions, 9 recommendations were provided:

- Develop a new logo
- Find a central message
- Create a new website
- Create a new database with campaign tools (Action Network)
- Refresh social media
- Create purpose driven research
- Focus on core campaigns
- Refresh media relations
- Adopt a government relations strategy

The logo and tagline have been approved. Work on the database and the website should be completed by early 2023.

A final strategic communications plan will be completed by the end of 2022.

Crisis in Provincial Criminal Justice Systems

Canada's provincial criminal justice systems are in crisis for workers and inmates. Too many correctional facilities are dilapidated, old, crumbling, with unsanitary and inhumane living conditions. They are dangerously overcrowded, and they have poor ventilation and low-quality air filtration, which have led to dozens of COVID-19 outbreaks.

Correctional facilities have become institutions of last resort for people with addictions and mental health issues. These institutions offer limited access to adequate treatment programs or rehabilitation services.

What all this means for front-line corrections workers is exposure to extremely dangerous work environments with serious health and safety risks, especially COVID-19. There are daily incidents of violence directly related to overcrowding. And officers have no special training dealing with offenders with mental health or addictions issues, and there are not enough correctional nurses to cope.

There's a critical shortage of correctional officers. And there are problems recruiting and retaining for all categories of corrections workers.

It should therefore come as no surprise that correctional workers suffer from mental injury. They are almost 5.5 times more likely than the general population, and the highest among all public safety personnel, to screen positive for clinically significant symptoms consistent with one or more mental disorders.

In 2022, the National Union continued to work with Components to defend and promote the rights of all justice workers;

- condemn the ongoing overcrowding crisis in provincial and federal correctional facilities;
- highlight the crisis of understaffing and of retention and recruitment due to inadequate compensation, poor health and safety standards, and violence against justice workers;
- work with Components to lobby federal and provincial governments to improve the working conditions of justice workers;
- work with Components to develop and coordinate actions and communications strategies addressing the crisis in provincial criminal justice systems;
- educate the public that incarcerating people with addictions and mental illness is an inhumane, unacceptable, unjust policy response to inadequate community mental health supports;
- work with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) to create an action plan that protects the mental and physical health and safety of workers and all those who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Cyber Security

On February 8, 2022, a videoconference was held with NAPE and NUPGE staff members about cyber attacks against health authorities in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Primarily 2 regional health authorities, Eastern Health and Central Health, were attacked sometime from October 28 to 29, 2021, until the week of December 25 to January 1, 2022.

The attacks compromised the personal information of staff and patients (log-in information for remote work, health information, social insurance numbers), disabled online communications (staff email), payroll services, appointments, and vax-pass portals.

The main topics of discussion at the meeting included

- the importance of communications with government;
- developing protocols for extra staffing to handle offline patient and staff services (paper copies of pay cheques and phone bookings);
- credit monitoring;
- integrated capacity management systems—fine tune to optimize capacity, efficiency, quality, and controllability;
- supply-chain issues.

There is ongoing discussion regarding another meeting on the subject of cyber attacks and cyber security.

Domestic Violence

The health mandates put in place to restrict the rate of infections during the COVID-19 pandemic have led to an alarming increase in domestic/intimate partner violence.

Why? Because the isolation has empowered the perpetrators, and those seeking help to escape the violence have struggled to find assistance, as most support groups and agencies were closed.

This has led to a pandemic within the pandemic. Evidence has shown that the rate of domestic/intimate partner violence has increased, and the injuries resulting from these incidents are much more serious.

The Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI) continues to work on the issue of domestic/intimate partner violence. At the March 2022 videoconference, the committee



[discussed a study called *The Shadow Pandemic: A Qualitative Exploration of the Impacts of COVID-19 on Service Providers and Women Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence and Brain Injury*](#), which probes how the pandemic has affected victims of violence. The committee also discussed one of the highlighted items of the study: traumatic brain injuries caused by domestic/intimate partner violence.

The ACWI continues to highlight the need for better funding for shelters and transition houses, affordable housing, public services for both those escaping violence and those perpetuating the violence. There is also the need for education within our school systems to reinforce that violence should never be used.

The ACWI is pleased that, due to pressure from unions, women's groups, and domestic violence groups, there is domestic violence leave in all provinces and territories. The committee will continue to work to ensure that the domestic violence leave is paid. The committee has also been provided with information regarding the [Domestic Violence Legislation Comparison](#) map. The CLC has created the map, which compares domestic violence legislation as of September 2020 across Canada.

At the ACWI meeting in June 2022, interest was expressed to receive information regarding bystander intervention. The committee was provided with information about the online National Sexual Violence Resource Center, which has a section on Bystander Intervention Resources. This section offers advocates and preventionists a collection of information and resources on bystander intervention. It includes resources to use with community members, as well as information and research on the effectiveness of bystander intervention. The committee noted that any training on the issue must have supports provided for those who could be triggered during and after the training.

Employment Insurance Reform

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic made the gaps in the Employment Insurance (EI) program blindingly obvious and the federal government committed to reforming the program, progress has been slow. While there have been consultations, key issues like improvements to benefits and expanded eligibility have yet to be addressed. At the same time, temporary improvements to the EI program were allowed to expire so we are back to the pre-pandemic program with its gaps in coverage and often inadequate benefits.

The National Union has been pushing the federal government for improvements to EI. NUPGE Secretary-Treasurer Jason MacLean was part of the consultation process on improvements to the appeals process. Presidents of 2 NUPGE Components participated in provincial roundtables on proposed changes. The National Union has also spoken out on the need for increases in benefits, improved coverage and for temporary measures to remain in place until permanent improvements are introduced.

Global Movement to Suspend the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)

The COVID-19 pandemic was supposed to engender global solidarity, as evident in the slogan, “We are all in this together.” However, with respect to vaccines and vaccine technology, what emerged was global protectionism and inequality.

In 2020, a handful of multinational pharmaceutical companies were granted tens of billions of dollars in public funding to promote the research and development of COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics. Instead of sharing the technology, and bringing a swift end to the pandemic, these same companies were granted exclusive monopoly rights over the technologies and vaccines they developed

This vaccine protectionism exists because of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its rules on intellectual property known as TRIPS: the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

TRIPS is a comprehensive multilateral international legal agreement binding all WTO member states and requiring them to protect intellectual property (IP) rights. The TRIPS regime is essentially a free license for pharmaceutical companies to accumulate staggering profits, while people in the Global South are denied access to vaccines and vaccine technology.

To end this grotesque inequality, a global campaign for a TRIPS waiver was launched by a coalition of states and civil society organizations, including the World Health Organization, Médecins Sans Frontières, and Public Services International. Canada was one of a small group of states that refused to support a waiver, undermining the campaign and eventually producing a limited and possibly unusual TRIPS clarification related to generic vaccine exports.

The movement is now demanding that the WTO member states expand this limited decision to cover COVID-19-related medicines and technologies, to make these essential goods available cheaply to all countries. Once again Canada is opposing this expansion, making it hard for citizens in the Global South receive the same level of COVID-19 protection that Canadians have.

Income Inequality

When NUPGE began its efforts to draw attention to income inequality, Canada and other countries were debating who would pay for the 2007–2008 financial crisis.

Those whose actions caused the crisis, and who received



billions in bailouts during the crisis, were arguing that it should be low- and middle-income people who should foot the bill through the implementation of austerity policies.

In many places, they were successful. Income inequality, which had already been growing before the financial crisis, got even worse.

In response, the National Union made fighting income inequality a priority. We were the first union in Canada to take on the issue. When we started our work on income inequality, much of our focus had to be making people aware of just how bad it had become.

Since then, we've seen growing recognition that income inequality is a problem and can't be allowed to continue to increase. In no small part, that is due to the work of the National Union.

Our research, public awareness campaigns, and lobbying initiatives have shown the negative impacts income inequality has on people. We have fought for measures to fight income inequality, including expanded government services, tax fairness, and modern economic strategies.

But what is clear from the attempts to introduce austerity policies to pay for the COVID-19 pandemic is that those who benefit from income inequality have not given up. Even though the pandemic showed how much we rely on public services, and how funding cuts and privatization put people at risk, we are still seeing a push for austerity policies.

In the same way that we started taking on income inequality over a decade ago, the National Union is ready for the fight against measures that threaten to make inequality even worse. But this time, we are able to build on over a decade of work by people in all parts of our union. And that work is continuing.

Work the National Union is doing and research we're supporting makes it clear that austerity policies aren't needed. But stopping austerity is only the first step. As materials the National Union has produced make clear, building back better has to include measures that will significantly reduce income inequality. This includes strengthening the public services low- and middle-income Canadians rely on and ensuring working people aren't left behind in the transition to a green economy.

International Solidarity

NUPGE remains committed to international solidarity work in a variety of areas. This includes speaking out against human rights violations, supporting humanitarian responses to crises, showing solidarity with workers and trade union movements around the world, and supporting migrant and refugee rights. In its international efforts, NUPGE works with allies, for instance, through the CLC International Group.

This year, NUPGE has spoken out about international crises, including issuing statements condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine and expressing solidarity with the growing women-led movement in Iran. NUPGE continues its work to support the labour and social movements in Colombia and to show solidarity with the Rohingya, supporting on-the-ground organizations in both cases. Donations from the John Fryer Fund also went towards humanitarian responses to crises, such as the situation in Ukraine, Typhoon Rai in the Philippines, the hunger crisis in the Horn of Africa, and catastrophic flooding in Pakistan. Here in Canada, we have continued to join the calls for Status for All and amplify the demands of migrant-led groups like Migrant Rights Network. One demand was for the federal government to implement a comprehensive and inclusive regularization program.



Opioid-Related Poison Drug Overdose Crisis

There's another epidemic in Canada: a public health crisis of drug overdoses. In some provinces, it's killing more people than COVID-19. In 2018, we called it an opioid crisis. Today it's a poison drug crisis, with people unintentionally overdosing on lethal cocktails of synthetic opioids, typically fentanyl, mixed with stimulants like cocaine. The ingredients are illicit, nonpharmaceutical, nonprescription, and bootleg.

With COVID-19, overdose deaths increased dramatically, for many reasons:

- unscrupulous dealers facing lack of supply contaminated their drugs with toxic additives;
- users lost access to life-saving medical supervision due to social distancing rules and a health system on the brink;
- social isolation created new users and heavier abuse.

For workers, the poison drug crisis is a hazard to occupational health and safety. NUPGE Components have reported cases of workplace exposure, injury, illness, and hospitalization across occupational groups, especially among corrections officers, youth facility workers, paramedics, hospital staff, and front-line crisis workers.

Governments are focused on mitigating overdoses and deaths (surveillance and enforcement), but this has failed. To reduce harm and save lives, we need to do the following:

Stop the illicit market: amend the Controlled Drugs & Substances Act to remove opioids as an indictable offence and legalize small amounts for personal use.

Harm-reduction strategies: provide tax-funded, medically assisted consumption sites for safe personal use, and create a regulated safe supply (providing safer substitutes under medical supervision to stop the toxic drugs causing overdoses).

- **Recovery and treatment:** provide tax-funded public access to addictions and
- **Mental health services:** treatment on demand via the public health system.
- **Guarantee pan-Canadian equal access:** provide access to supplies and programs, without the threat of provincial barriers, by bringing them under the *Canada Health Act*.
- **Stop workplace exposure:** improve inmate mental health and addictions services, and stop poison drugs from entering facilities in the first place.

Pensions

The National Union’s work on pensions is focused on supporting the work of Component pension fund trustees and pension activists and addressing issues related to federal legislation and pensions. To assist Component pension fund trustees and pension activists in their work, a working session was held in Ottawa on October 20–21, 2022.

Participants in the pension working session were able to discuss several issues facing members’ pension plans in different provinces. These issues included indexing formulas and professionalization of pension plans boards. There were presentations on pension investment issues and federal programs like the CPP. Participants provided valuable feedback on the content and structure of the National Union’s pensions manual.

Presumptive Legislation for Occupational Psychological/ Mental Injury

There is alarming data on mental injury among Justice Workers (JWs). Credible scientific evidence published in reputable Canadian peer-review journals reveals that JWs have substantially more difficulties with mental injury than the general population. The scientific research shows that JWs are screening positive for high rates of clinically significant symptoms consistent with one or more mental disorders:

- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- major depressive disorder
- generalized anxiety disorder
- social anxiety disorder
- panic disorder
- mood disorder
- alcohol and drug abuse

Some JWs (such as firefighters, paramedics, and police officers) are almost 4.5 times more likely than the general population to screen positive for mental injury. Among all JWs, the worst-off are correctional workers: they are 5.5 times more likely than the general population to report symptoms of mental injury.

Persuading provincial governments to adopt presumptive legislation for occupational mental injury counts among the victories of Canadian organized labour. Nevertheless, presumptive laws need improvement. The major flaw is that there are no pan-Canadian standards because Workers' Compensation falls under provincial constitutional jurisdiction. The result is a mess of inconsistencies, a hodgepodge of presumptive coverage in which workers are treated unequally, and in some cases, their rights to occupational health and safety are not protected at all.

There are 4 flaws in the existing policy framework (provincial presumptive legislation):

1. Many workers are excluded: presumption typically covers categories of workers exclusively defined as public safety personnel.
2. In some provinces, all psychological injuries are covered, while in others, only PTSD is covered, and other mental injuries are neglected.
3. Some provinces rule out altogether any chronic mental stress that develops gradually and cumulatively over time.
4. Some provinces cover mental injuries triggered only by trauma, while others cover mental injury triggered by both traumatic and nontraumatic stressors.

To correct these flaws, the National Union will campaign for common Canadian standards of presumptive legislation. This legislation must cover mental occupational injury for all workers, and for all scientifically recognized types of mental injury, including, but not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

We will fight for public policies that recognize workplace stressors that cause both chronic psychological injuries (developed gradually and cumulatively over time in response to a series of events or to multiple exposures to workplace stressors) and acute mental injury (the result of one single, sudden, discrete, traumatic workplace or work-related event).

And we will lobby for policies that include both traumatic and nontraumatic workplace stress triggers. Nontraumatic workplace stress is triggered by continuous or multiple exposures to significant workplace stressors that do psychological harm but don't rise to the level of trauma.

Responding to Austerity Post-COVID

The National Union is continuing its work to oppose the introduction of austerity measures as the COVID-19 pandemic ends. The National Union worked with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) on reports on how provincial government revenues had been affected by the pandemic.

The most recent report, *Flush With Cash: The provinces are richer than they think*, showed that provincial government finances are in good shape. Every province has had a budget surplus or will shortly. 9 of the 10 provinces are projecting that their finances will be in better shape than before the pandemic started.

Social Media

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the main social media channels on which the National Union shares its work. We amplify the voices of our Components and our allies to bring attention to issues that matter to members, the labour movement, and the public.

Valuing Care

The National Union has worked for decades to highlight the issue of care—both the rights and dignity of those receiving care and the rights of workers that provide care. The Advisory Committee on Women’s Issues has highlighted, in particular, the need for child care and elder care through its work on work/life balance and reporting how women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid caregiving. Women make up the majority of paid care workers and women of colour, immigrant women, and migrant women are overrepresented as care workers, especially among the lowest paid.



Care systems are in crisis due to decades of underfunding, neglect, deregulation, and privatization. Too often, care services are fragmented rather than delivered through coherent systems. Workers in the care economy face diverse challenges, but common factors are low wages, poor working conditions, precarious employment, and high turnover. Staffing shortages that predated the pandemic are worsening due to overwork and burnout. At convention, a policy paper was produced stressing the need for sustained public investment to ensure high-quality care delivered through publicly funded and publicly managed systems, and decent work for all care workers. The policy paper resolution was passed, along with several others related to care. NUPGE has been amplifying campaigns on care by the CLC and PSI.

On November 1, the CLC held a Care Economy Policy Incubator. It brought together representatives from CLC affiliates and allies. NUPGE participated in this incubator, which examined the current state of care in Canada and aimed to develop a policy and advocacy agenda across all care sectors. 4 themes were developed: the right to care (securing care as a human right), a Care Economy Commission, the scope and definition of care, and building an inclusive agenda for care.

Website

Our website, nupge.ca, is a central hub for the work done by the National Union. We share labour news, updates from Components, research and campaign news and material. Stories are published daily and sent in bulk mailings to activists. In 2022, we have published 225 stories, while the website received 162,448 views.

CONCLUSION

Together, with our members, the broader labour movement, and our international counterparts, we have accomplished much this year. We have responded to the challenges of this major health care crisis, while at the same time, advocating on behalf of workers—for those who are in our union, and for those who aren't.

We have adapted to a new way of working, with virtual meetings, conversations and collective problem solving. We have embraced these changes and used new tools to engage in more meaningful ways with our members to make our union stronger.

We have called out discrimination, violence, and abuse.

We have demanded action against climate change.

We have challenged employers and governments to do better, to be more compassionate and to act responsibly to build a stronger country for all of us.

We have infused our work with our core values of fairness and justice. Ultimately, we have worked hard to improve the lives of working families and our communities by ensuring our common wealth is used for the common good.

This is the work we did in 2022. Together, we all will do better.

NUPGE Meetings

January 12	Component Elected Executive Officers
January 26	UCCO Raid of Newfoundland Corrections Officers
February 8	Special Anti-Racism Committee Videoconference Component
February 9	Elected Executive Officers
February 15	Indigenous Issues
March 1	Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues
March 1	Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Retail
March 2–3	Representatives Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
March 7	Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee
March 9	Advisory Committee on the Environment
March 2-3	Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
March 20	National Union Finance Committee
March 24	Special Committee on Child Care
March 28	UCCO Raid of Newfoundland Corrections Officers
March 28–29	Health Human Resources Working Group
April 5	Privatization: Researchers, Communications Staff, and Campaigners
April 12	Legal Strategies Component Coordinating Committee
April 14	Component Indigenous Representatives
May 3–4	Joint Finance Committee and Component Elected Finance Officers and Staff
May 11	Component Elected Executive Officers
May 11–12	Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat
June 16	Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
August 13–19	23rd Leadership Development School
August 17	Finance Committee
September 19	Finance Committee
September 22–23	Correctional Officers and Youth Facility Worker Representatives
October 4	Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Sales
October 11	Representatives Component Elected Executive Officers
October 13–14	Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
October 20–21	NUPGE Conference on the Environment
October 20–21	Pension Working Session
October 27–28	Component Communication Officers
October 27	Special Committee on Child Care
Oct 31–Nov. 1	Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat
November 7–8	Young Workers' Conference
November 9	Legal Strategies Component Coordinating Committee
November 17	Privatization: Researchers, Communications Staff, and Campaigners
November 28	Finance Committee
December 14	Anti-Racism Committee

External Meetings

January 11	CLC Executive Committee Virtual
January 12	CLC Environment Advisory Committee
January 13	CCPA—Trade and Investment Research Project (TIRP) Briefing: CUSMA Panel Decision on Dairy
January 17–18	CLC Canadian Council
January 20	Canadian Health Coalition Board
January 26	Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), Development Advisory Committee National Action Plan (NAP) on Mental Health and Criminal Justice
January 27	Canadian for Tax Fairness (C4TF) Board
February 1	CHC Pharmacare Strategy
February 7	CLC Special Meeting re Truck Convoy Pandemic Protest
February 8	CLC International Group
February 8	CHC Board Seniors/Long-Term Care Committee
February 10	CLC National Political Action Committee
February 12	Counter Protest to End Ottawa Truck Convoy Occupation
February 15	CLC Child Care Working Group
February 16	Trade Justice Network
February 23	CLC Legal Challenges Coordinating Committee
February 23	CLC Text Rally, Beyond Black History Month
February 24	CLC UNCSW 66 Trade Union Delegation Briefing
March 1–4	SHARE Investor Summit
March 1	Cannabis Retail Representatives
March 7	Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee
March 9	Advisory Committee on the Environment
March 14–25	66 th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
March 16	Collective Bargaining, Police Unions, Race and Civilian Deaths Seminar
March 22	CLC National Political Action Committee
March 22	Hate Crimes in Canada: Justice System Gaps and Strengths Trade and Investment Research Project
March 23	Trade Justice Network
March 23	Trade Justice Network
March 24	Green Economy Network
March 24	Carleton Work and Labour Advisory Board
March 30–April 1	Transition to a Just Economy Dialogues Canadian for Tax Fairness Board CLC Employment Insurance Committee
April 2	Fairness Board CLC Employment Insurance Committee
April 4	CLC Legal Challenges Committee
April 5	CLC Executive Committee
April 6	CLC Pension Advisory Committee Group
April 11	Mental Health Commission of Canada
April 13	CLC Solidarity and Pride Working Group
April 19	CLC Anti-privatization Researchers' Group

April 21	CLC Indigenous Rights Working Group
April 25	Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Strategy Session
April 26	BC Government and NUPGE
April 27	CLC Young Workers' Advisory Committee
April 27	Canada Employment and Social Development's Labour Program, Tripartite Virtual Roundtable re ILO Annual Conference
April 29	PSI LGBT+ Global Working Group
May 4—6	ILGA World Conference
May 5	Council of Canadians Webinar: Policing, Protest and the Resurgence of the Far Right
May 11	CLC Environment Advisory
May 12	CLC Pension Advisory Committee
May 17	CLC International Group
May 17	CLC Disability Rights Working Group
May 25	CLC Women's Advisory Committee
May 26	International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group
May 27—June 11	PSI's 110th International Labour Conference
May 29—May 31	2022 National Apprentice Conference
June 9	CLC Workers of Color Working Group
June 13	CLC Executive Committee
June 14	CLC Human Rights Advisory Committee
July 25	Canadian Peace Officers Memorial Association
August 26	Canadian Blood Services Representatives
August 31	Migrant Rights Network (MRN) Labour Solidarity Committee
September 8	Green Economy Network (GEN)
September 12	CLC Employment Insurance Committee
September 13—14	SI North American Affiliates
September 16	CLC International Group
September 26	Mental Health Commission of Canada
September 26—27	CLC Women's Advisory Committee
September 26—28	Climate Action Network (CAN-Rac) Days on the Hill
September 28	Child Care Now: National Child Care
September 26	Development Advisory Committee, National Action Plan on Mental Health & Criminal Justice, Mental Health Commission of Canada
September 26—27	CLC Women's Advisory Committee
September 26—28	Climate Action Network Lobby Days
October 3	CLC Indigenous Rights Working Group
October 4	CLC Solidarity and Pride Working Group
October 5	CLC Human Rights Advisory Committee
October 5	CLC Legal Challenges Coordinating Committee
October 6	CLC Disability Rights Working Group
October 6	Canadian Health Coalition Board: Paid Plasma Working Group

October 12	CLC Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Committee
October 13	CLC Pension Advisory Committee Group
October 13	CLC Environment Advisory Committee
October 25	CLC Canadian Council
October 27	Canadian Health Coalition Development Advisory Committee,
November 1	National Action Plan on Mental Health & Criminal Justice, Mental Health Commission of Canada
November 1	CLC Education Advisory Committee
November 1	CLC Care Economy Fall 2022 Policy Incubator
November 6–18	UNFCCC Conference (COP 27), Sharm El-Sheik (Egypt)
November 10	Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) Pharmacare Working Group
November 30	Mental Health Commission of Canada

Government Relations Letters

January 13	Letter to Seamus O’Regan, Minister of Labour, asking for protections and supports for workers who are precariously employed.
January 19	Letter to François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, regarding the need for more comprehensive data on precarious employment in Canada.
January 26	Letter from Seamus O’Regan, Minister of Labour, to Rosa Pavanelli, General Secretary, Public Services International (PSI), and the National Union, reporting that Canada has signed off on International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 190. Letter states that the government is currently working closely with provincial and territorial governments with a view towards ratification of Convention 190 and hopes to ratify the Convention as early as possible.
February 1	Letter to Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, asking for bold action to tackle the climate crisis, and as emphasized previously in a letter to his predecessor, Minister Wilkinson, the public sector has an essential role to play.
February 17	Draft changes to the Lobbyists’ Code of Conduct submitted to the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying.
February 25	Federal Budget 2022 Consultations—online submission.

- April 4 Letter requesting a meeting, including representatives of the BCFMWU, to discuss concerns around the issue of the corporate practice of importing of foreign workers in the marine industry and firing existing workers.
- April 5 Letter to Taylor Bachrach, Federal NDP MP, Member of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.
- Letter requesting a meeting with him and the representatives of the BCFMWU to discuss concerns about the corporate practice of importing of foreign workers in the marine industry and firing existing workers.
- April 13 Letter to Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development; cc: the Prime Minister and Leaders of the other federal parties and Rosa Pavanelli, General Secretary, PSI.
- Letter calling on the federal government to reject the recently leaked WTO text and come back to the original intention and vision contained in the TRIPS Waiver proposal made by India and South Africa.
- April 21 Letter to Provincial Premiers: John Horgan, Premier of BC; Jason Kenney, Premier of Alberta; Scott Moe, Premier of Saskatchewan, Heather Stefanson, Premier of Manitoba; Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario; François Legault, Premier of Quebec; Blaine Higgs, Premier of NB; Tim Houston, Premier of NS; Dennis King, Premier of PEI; Andrew Furey, Premier of NL; Sandy Silver, Premier of Yukon; Caroline Cochrane, Premier of NWT; P.J. Akeeagok, Premier of Nunavut;
- Letter in support of collecting race-based COVID-19 data at the federal and provincial levels.

Government Relations Meetings

- April 21 Provincial/Territorial Premiers—in support of collecting race-based COVID-19 data at the federal and provincial levels.
- April 29 NDP Critic for Families, Children, and Social Development, Gazan—request for a meeting to discuss how to continue to move forward a child care system that is truly universal, public, non-profit, inclusive, and high quality.

- April 29 Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development, Gould—follow up to December, 2021 letter, writing to again request a meeting to discuss members’ experiences and needs and to discuss strategies to address the workforce challenges in the sector and the development of federal child care legislation.
- April 29 Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Fraser—2nd request at Danilo de Leon August 29 deportation be stopped and that Canada grant him permanent resident status as his being the chairperson of Migrante Canada could have him facing political persecution if he is returned to the Philippines. 1st request on July 17, 2020 to then Minister of Foreign Affairs Champagne.
- August 10 PM Trudeau and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Fraser—proposed regularization program for people without status in Canada to give permanent residence to low-waged migrant workers with temporary or insecure status.
- August 26 PM Trudeau and cc Deputy PM Chrystia Freeland, and Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Qualtrough—concern about the problems that will be created if measures put in place to address the shortcomings of the Employment Insurance (EI) program end on September 24, 2022.
- September 26–28 Lobby with Climate Action Network (CAN-Rac) Days on the Hill
- October 13 Meeting with MP Leah Gazan and staff member Peyton Veitch with BCGEU President Stephanie Smith—the Canada-wide child care system and workforce issues was discussed.
- October 20 Meeting with Federal Minister of Health Minister, Duclos and CLC Officers, staff and members of the CLC Executive Committee—virtual roundtable with 2 federal ministers to discuss health worker shortage crisis. President Blundon spoke on home care and long-term care concerns and the urgent need for a pan-Canadian human resources strategy for health professionals. The meeting provided an opportunity for organized labour to outline to Minister Duclos and Minister Khara that this crisis needed federal leadership and that both workers and patients were suffering because of the ongoing labour shortages in health care.
- November 2 Ontario Premier Doug Ford—condemning Bill 28 and the legislation to impose a contract on 55,000 education workers who are members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). and invoking the notwithstanding clause that is an outrageous attack on workers’ rights and human rights.

November 22 Meeting with Ontario NDP MP and Health Critic France Gelinas, Anil Naidoo, Kat Lanteigne, BloodWatch; OPSEU/SEFPO members Geoff Cain, Noemi Khondo and Kelsea Mahabir—re Canadian Blood Services, paid plasma and respecting the Voluntary Blood Donations Act (2014). The ONDP agreed to put forward a question in Ontario Legislature and hold a December 7, 2022 press conference focused on ensuring the Ontario government respects the Ontario ban on paid plasma.

Publications

January *Medavie Inc.* (Updated)

February Submission to the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying on Draft Changes to the Lobbyists' Code of Conduct

February Submission by the NUPGE to the Budget 2022 Consultations

March *Period Poverty in Canada*

March *Diversity and Inclusion in Our Unions: Anti-Black Racism*



NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES

- B. C. General Employees' Union (BCGEU)
- Health Sciences Association of British Columbia (HSABC)
- Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA)
- Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union (SGEU)
- Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan (HSAS)
- Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan (HSAS)
- Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union (MGEU)
- Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals (MAHCP)
- Ontario Public Service Employees Union/Syndicat des employés de la fonction publique de l'Ontario (OPSEU/SEFPO)
- Canadian Union of Brewery and General Workers (CUBGW)
- New Brunswick Union of Public and Private Employees (NBU)
- Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union (NSGEU)
- PEI Union of Public Sector Employees (PEI UPSE)
- Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees (NAPE)

The National Union of Public and General Employees is an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress and a member of Public Services International.

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2023

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) is a family of 13 Components. Taken together, we are one of the largest unions in Canada. Most of our 425,000 members work to deliver public services of every kind to the citizens of their home provinces. We also have a large and growing number of members who work for private businesses.

The office of the National Union of Public and General Employees is on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

We recognize the crimes that have been committed and the harm that has been done and dedicate ourselves as a union to moving forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of reconciliation and striving for justice.

Bert Blundon, President

Jason MacLean, Secretary-Treasurer

Dear Friends:

The *Annual Report 2023* highlights the extensive work of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) over the last 12 months.

Our union has had an incredibly exciting year. A year into the rebranding of our identity and profile, our members and the broader labour movement have been impressed with our modern approach to our work. We have been expanding our reach on key national issues like health care, affordable housing, and the rising cost of living. Our Climate Change at Work campaign has promoted the *Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act*, which will create a framework for the Just Transition to ensure workers in resource-based sectors will have good, meaningful jobs.



We have attracted the interest of more health professionals, to be the fastest-growing union of health care workers in the country. Welcoming the 4,000 new members from Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan (HSAS) to our family further bolsters our voice. This gives us an edge when it comes to speaking about the real challenges facing health care workers as we cope with the repercussions of COVID-19 and the human resource crisis in the sector.

We have faced a political landscape where conservative actors lead the majority of governments. We have a federal government that has weathered one of the biggest health care and economic crises in decades. The next federal election looms large as we continue to carry out our strategic plan that is grounded in fairness, equity, and justice.

The increase in privatizing health care has been a constant threat to the security of our public health care system. We see the expansion of for-profit clinics that are taking on medical procedures normally reserved for the public system. We have been fighting the transfer of our blood collection system to for-profit entities in several provinces (except in BC, where they have banned private clinics from collecting blood! Hurray!).

We have faced so many challenges at the bargaining table, where employers are whittling away at the hard-fought gains workers have made. More and more of our members have said enough is enough. Like in Manitoba, where our Components, the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union (MGEU/NUPGE) and the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals (MAHCP/NUPGE) received overwhelming strike mandates from their members. And when it came time to strike, our lines were packed with committed members and our allies.

I'm proud of our work in Saskatchewan against government attacks on gender identity. The Premier's use of the notwithstanding clause to override human rights contained in the *Canadian*

Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a terrible abuse of power and has encouraged others to trample on the rights of vulnerable groups. Working with other unions and allies, we sent a strong message that we would not tolerate such abuse. We put governments on notice that we would oppose their efforts to undermine human rights.

Bringing Workers Together

We know that business and governments meet regularly to strategize, so it's important that we bring together members through meetings focused on occupations and sectors, issue-based gatherings, or through our committee system. The decisions by one provincial government are regularly watched, and often replicated by others, depending on what will help them achieve their goals.



It is essential that we share information, experience, and expertise so that our union and members are ready to take on any challenge that arises. A key part of what we do is building and strengthening the relationships with our allies. Working with like-minded groups is important to building our presence on the national stage, making an impact on priority issues, and putting forward our progressive agenda for a better world.

Some of the groups we worked with in 2023 are Canadians for Tax Fairness, the Canadian Health Coalition, the Black Class Action Secretariat, the Climate Action Network, and Child Care Now. It's important for our union to not just fight for workers' rights but to work with those fighting for justice and equality, strong public health care, tax fairness, and environmental sustainability.

Time and again, we prove that when we work together, we can move mountains. This report details our involvement nationally and internationally movements with the Canadian Labour Congress, Public Services International, and the International Trade Union Confederation.

NUPGE Staff

The accomplishments of the National Union would not be possible without the talented, committed people who put our members first every day. Under the leadership of Managing Director Len Bush and National Coordinator Brenda Hildahl, our NUPGE staff members continue to provide thoughtful, high-quality work, even under pressure. While they have different roles and responsibilities, they work together as a cohesive team, collaborating on events, research, and campaigns. We offer them our gratitude for their contributions and the passion and professionalism they bring to our union.

The National Executive Board

Our National Executive Board is comprised of the highest calibre of leaders in Canada. They have guided our Components to important wins that impact our and the labour movement. They are instrumental in the decision-making at the national level to ensure that NUPGE is a transparent, collaborative, and principled union. We are grateful for their support and engagement.

NUPGE Members

It is important that I conclude with an overwhelming thank you to our members in every region of our country. Being a trade unionist and activist takes effort. It takes time and commitment that often comes at some cost. Your ongoing determination and dedication, not to mention your sense of humour, has helped us become a powerful force provincially, nationally, and internationally.



Our work is based on the common values of fairness, justice, and equality. Those values drive our agenda with employers and governments. We will continue to fight for good jobs, safe working conditions, and retirement security for all workers. We remain vigilant against those who attempt to weaken our union and prey on vulnerable workers and communities. That could be austerity-focused governments, employers who care more about the bottom-line than workers' rights, or those who undermine our protected human rights here in Canada and around the world.

We will work with our allies to eliminate injustices like discrimination and intolerance in our workplaces and elsewhere. We will ensure that our future includes a transition to meaningful work for everyone and advances the environmental sustainability of our planet. And we do all of this in an effort to make this world a better place.

In solidarity,

Bert Blundon
President

NUPGE Executive Officers

President Bert Blundon

Secretary-Treasurer Jason MacLean

NUPGE Staff

Managing Director Len Bush

National Coordinator Brenda Hildahl

Executive Assistant to the Officers Deb Sonego

National Representatives
Jeryn Daly
Deborah Duffy
Nadia Ibrahim
Andrew McNeill
Anil Naidoo
Keith Noseworthy
Michael Temelini

Financial Administrator Lynda McGuigan

Administrative Representatives
Sandra Lea Megeney
Laura Rashotte
Sasha Saint-Aubin

Overview

On the heels of our Triennial Convention, we have focused on fulfilling the mandate our members have given us. NUPGE members prioritized many issues on which they wanted action taken. From ensuring that a national child care program comes to fruition, to pushing back on the rise of for-profit health care, to fighting racism and harassment, the National Union rose to the task.

NUPGE Working with Components

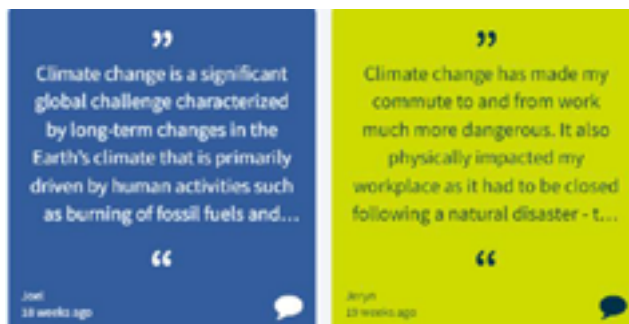
The National Union provides support to our 13 Components in a number of ways. Providing strategic advice and research, carrying out public policy research and campaigns, and being there for those unexpected challenges, NUPGE does not hesitate to help wherever possible.

An important way to support our Components is when we coordinate workers from across the country to share insights, develop common strategies, and build solidarity. These gatherings take the form of working groups, committees (and special committees), and conferences.

Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE)

ACE met virtually in March and in person in September. Committee members share the work their Components are doing related to the environment and climate change—from member education and engagement to greening their offices and activities. They discuss the political situation and developments in their home provinces. With this year being a particularly difficult one for extreme weather and disasters, the committee also discussed how climate change is impacting them, their members, and their unions. ACE continues to exchange information on collective agreement language related to the environment, as well as about the opportunities and barriers that exist. Their input helped NUPGE to produce a backgrounder, [Collective Bargaining for the Environment](#).

ACE also follows federal issues and policies. This year, those included the Just Transition, especially Bill C-50, the *Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act*, the oil and gas emissions cap, the proposed national strategy on environmental racism, and amending the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*. Through all this and more, ACE helps to inform NUPGE's work. ACE also gave valuable feedback on the [Climate Change at Work](#) campaign and discussed the resolutions from the 2022 convention.



Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI)

The Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI) met twice in 2023. The first meeting was on February 22, 2023, prior to NUPGE's Women in Leadership—Rise Up! Lift Up! Conference. Participants focused on reviewing the conference agenda and discussing ways the committee could take a leadership role.



The ACWI met again on November 6 to 7, 2023, via videoconference. A key concern of the committee has been the issue of period poverty. NUPGE has updated its publication [Period Poverty in Canada](#), which explores the effects, costs, and actions currently being taken regarding period poverty.

Members agreed that the terms of reference needed updating and must have an intersectional and gender-inclusive lens. NUPGE will develop a draft update of the Mandate and Terms of Reference for the committee and will present it to the committee in the near future.

Through the ACWI, the National Union has produced a publication entitled [The Cost of Being a Woman—The Pink Tax Phenomenon](#). In 2021, Parsehub conducted a study on the pink tax in Canada. Its [research](#) found that women are paying 50% more for unisex products and, in some categories, 60% more per 100 g of product. It is estimated that women in Canada pay an extra \$1,300 per year for products relatively similar to men's. This is on top of the existing pay-equity issue wherein women still only make between 75¢ and 85¢ for every dollar made by men. Both of these issues not only affect women's income in the present but also have a harmful impact on their retirement income.

Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues

The Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues (ACYWI) held a videoconference on March 21, 2023. There were 9 participants from 6 Components.

Discussion focused on member education and mentorship. Member education is a core focus of

many Components. Consistent with the findings of NUPGE's *Millennial Report*, many young workers (even union members) don't know what unions are and what they do. One tactic that has seen success across multiple Components is meeting the members where they are, which can take a variety of forms. Some Components have Board members or staff traveling the province to remote or rural communities. Some Components have started holding events after work hours and on weekends to increase rates of participation. Other ways to meet members where they are include

- creating material specifically tailored for young workers (e.g., podcasts),
- getting creative with social gatherings (e.g., booking a block of tickets for a play), or
- modifying traditional meeting styles to something more approachable (e.g., coffee-house style).

A subsection of member education that some Components have been working on is mentorship. A few Components have formal mentorship programs established. Some have no formal program in place but mentioned that their experienced activists are happy to take new and young members under their wing.

ACYWI met again on September 11 to 12, 2023, in Ottawa, for the first in-person meeting of the committee since it was formed. 7 participants from 6 Components participated.

Demographics remain a topic of conversation for Components. Several Components host a young workers' conference annually or biannually but are looking for ways to facilitate more events for young workers. Conversations about outreach through social media are ongoing. Participants also discussed content for NUPGE's website and NUPGE convention resolutions.

Kate Burkholder Harris gave a presentation on the national housing crisis.

At both meetings, ACYWI participants discussed NUPGE convention resolutions that relate to young workers' issues. Affordable housing and the housing crisis are issues that the committee may like to do more work on.

Anti-Racism Committee (ARC)

The Anti-Racism Committee (ARC) met for the first time in-person on June 20, 2023, on the second day of Issues Forum #1 in Ottawa. There were 14 participants from 8 Components and the meeting was chaired by Kane Tse, the President of Health Sciences Association of BC (HSABC/NUPGE).

Participants discussed the logistics for the upcoming Anti-Racism Conference. They gave suggestions on how to structure the conference, possible topics and speakers, and ideas for breakout sessions. Participants also went through the majority of NUPGE convention resolutions

relating to anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and and to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. The second ARC meeting of the committee took place on October 3, 2023, in Ottawa, preceding the Anti-Racism Conference. There were 18 participants from 7 Components.

Many Components who attended are working on adding equity seats to their executive boards. Some Components have been working on this initiative for more than a decade. They are facing challenges such as—How will people be elected? Who gets to vote for the seats? Other challenges are

- ensuring that the equity seats have real power attached to them, and
- ensuring structures are in place to make sure the people elected to equity seats are supported and set up for success.

Most Components are looking at ways they can capture demographic info about their members. There are legal concerns about whether unions can legally ask for and store demographic information. There are also concerns from equity seeking groups about how their data will be used and who will have access to it. Historically, BIPOC, people from 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and people with disabilities have been profiled and targeted using demographic data. It was stressed that unions must be clear about why they want this information and gain members' trust.

Participants continued the discussion about NUPGE convention resolutions. A suggestion was that one way to fulfil some resolutions could be for NUPGE to coordinate a national lobby day on which all Components lobby their provincial legislatures.

There were discussions about ways to keep Conference participants updated with activities of the union, as well as ways to allow committee members to collaborate online between meetings.

Anti-Racism Conference

NUPGE held its first Anti-Racism Conference in Ottawa on October 4 to 5, 2023. The conference was well attended with 50 participants from 12 Components.



A number of speakers addressed participants over 2 days. The conference was opened with a teaching from Elder Claudette Commanda, Algonquin Anishinaabe Elder from the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation, that touched on reconciliation, having respect for the earth, and the collective power of people uniting for a common cause.

Jennifer King, Director of Programs and Operations at the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, spoke about the philosophy of Touchstones of Hope as a process and set of principles for guiding meaningful reconciliation and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard gave a presentation on creating systemic change from within through the use of the Triple "A" Assessment Tool. Chanelle Tye and Heather Kelley hosted a session where they answered questions from participants regarding Carol Wall's article *Dear White Sisters and Brothers*. Later, Ingrid Palmer, an inspirational speaker and Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Specialist, spoke on her personal journey from childhood to the present. She spoke about being a Black, androgynous woman who spent time in the care system, experienced sexual abuse, and experienced major vision loss due to a rare disease.

Jason MacLean, NUPGE's Secretary-Treasurer and Kane Tse, HSABC's President and the Chair of NUPGE's Anti-Racism Committee, were part of a panel that fielded questions about race and racism.

Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat

The Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat (CHPS) meets twice a year. In 2023, meetings were held in June and November and participants discussed critical health care issues. CHPS represents specialized health professionals who provide diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitative health care as a critical part of the health care system.

CHPS members are front-line health care workers who are directly impacted by the poor management and lack of action by all levels of government. The ongoing labour shortages are leaving many health care professionals suffering from chronic workplace stress. Components are working to support their members and to press employers and governments to deal with these unacceptable pressures on workers.

The federal government reached an agreement with provincial and territorial governments, committing to an extra \$46.2 billion in health care funding over the next 10 years. While this money has the potential to alleviate some of the health care shortages, the deal was agreed to with no substantial strings attached, meaning that provinces and territories are not being held accountable for directing these funds toward health care.

Another significant development was the announcement of a dental care program, which was one

of the promises made in the Liberal/NDP Supply and Confidence Agreement. While this program will expand treatment to an estimated 9 million Canadians currently without care, it is troubling that this is being done outside the public system. This program is also a fill-in-the-gaps program, which means that it is not universal or single payer, leaving some Canadians outside the plan.

The announcement of pharmacare legislation, as promised under the agreement, has been delayed until March 1, 2024, because the NDP rejected the initial program proposed by the federal government. It remains to be seen whether the program announced will be a universal, single-payer system, but concerns are that the federal government is reluctant to go this far. Without a single-payer system, Canadians will continue to pay nearly the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. NUPGE views this as unacceptable and will continue to work with CHPS and allies to apply pressure to the federal government.



NUPGE views this as unacceptable and will continue to work with CHPS and allies to apply pressure to the federal government.

The federal government has promised a Safe Long-Term Care Act, yet this also looks like a disappointment and lost opportunity. The standards that were created through a process run by accreditation organizations do not include hours of care, staffing ratios, and is not enforceable. This means that the lessons we learned during the pandemic, and through the large loss of life in care homes are not being applied. NUPGE will continue to advocate for long-term care to be brought under the *Canada Health Act*.

Finally, the Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear an appeal of the Cambie Case. This means that the lower court rulings that ruled in favour of our position on protecting public health care are confirmed, and the Charter challenge by the for-profit clinics has failed. Privatization of our health care system, however, still continues despite this ruling.

Component Communications Officers Working Group

NUPGE held a video conference with 21 Component communications officers from 9 Components on April 13, 2023. An in-person meeting in Ottawa was held November 7 to 8, 2023, with 17 participants from 10 Components. National President Bert Blundon addressed the participants with an update on the National Union's activities.

He highlighted NUPGE's stance on the war in Gaza and our calls for a ceasefire. He applauded the progress being made at the bargaining table through negotiations and as a result of strike action. He shared how positive the feedback has been about the union's rebranding. The union continues to focus on spreading our news online and increasing our presence with government officials on key issues facing members and the public.



At both meetings, participants reviewed the political landscape throughout the country and reviewed new and ongoing Component campaigns. Participants were encouraged to highlight their work through presentations, sharing ads or videos, or campaign material. Best practices were discussed as they relate to online campaigning, social media, and effective platforms to use.

Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Representatives

2 meetings of Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Retail Representatives were held in 2023. Privatization is still the focus of many of the discussions.

In March, SGEU/NUPGE very kindly shared information on their campaign to stop the provincial government from closing the remaining publicly owned liquor stores. At the October meeting, there was a chance to hear from the MGEU/NUPGE about their liquor store strike and efforts to fight privatization of liquor stores in Manitoba. What had a significant impact in Manitoba was that the opposition NDP was strong enough to delay legislation until after the provincial election that would have allowed the provincial government to privatize liquor. But the NDP was elected instead.

Because workers are facing very similar threats in all provinces with public liquor stores, the information sharing at meetings of Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Retail Representatives continues to be important. And the willingness of staff and activists in each province to do what they could to support other Components in their fights against liquor store privatization reflects how deeply ingrained the value of solidarity is in the National Union.

Correctional Officers and Youth Facility Workers

The annual Working Session for NUPGE Correctional Officers and Youth Facility Workers Representatives was held in Ottawa September 21 to 22, 2023, with 35 participants from 7 Components.

A central focus of this year's meeting was occupational health and safety (OHS) issues, particularly mental health and mental injury, which accounted for a significant portion of the meeting's discussion.

A guest at the meeting was Dr. Rosemary Ricciardelli from Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, who presented mental health data from each province and territory. Other invited guests at the meeting who spoke on mental health were Amy Fogarty, Mental Health Advancement, Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), and Dr. Christopher Canning, Director, Research and Academics, Waypoint Research Institute, Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care. Dr. Canning presented on the work of MHCC to develop an action plan on mental health and criminal justice.

There was a group discussion on mental injury in which participants responded to the guest speakers and talked about organizational and operational stressors and measures available to assist workers who develop mental injuries.

There was a comprehensive and thorough discussion on the following topics

- Collective bargaining and grievance update
- Wages
- Workplace violence
- Raiding
- Inmate classification system
- Staffing-shortage crisis
- Recruitment, retention, and turnover in relation to low morale, burnout, and low wages



On Sunday, September 24, as in previous years, many of the NUPGE working group members participated in the annual Canadian peace officers' memorial on Parliament Hill.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Workers

A Working Session for Emergency Medical Services' (EMS) Workers Representatives was held in Ottawa May 2 to 3, 2023, with 23 participants from 6 Components.

The main focus of the 2-day meeting was to share information and develop a strategy regarding the systemic failure across Canada in the EMS, the evidence for which was from eyewitness testimony of the participants themselves. Participants had common experiences with dramatic increases in call volumes and offload delays—that is, the backups and delays in handoffs due to rampant overcrowding in hospital emergency departments. Accordingly, part of the discussion was about procedures and processes in place for handoff to hospital to reduce delays. They also talked about the alarming frequency where there were no ambulances or paramedics available to help, even in critical instances. They all reported very poor rural services, where the delays are due to large geographical distances to travel, and interprovincial travel.

The following topics were also discussed:

- hours of work, work/life balance, pace of work, long shifts
- wages and wage discrepancies between rural and urban paramedics
- existing pensions for EMS Workers: strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for improvement
- training practices and standards, and lack thereof—comparing across Canada, including
 - the scope of practices
 - licensing exams
 - regulatory bodies
 - education requirements
- for-profit delivery models: how privatization (public funding, private ownership and delivery) privileges shareholder value and subverts quality public service
 - How for-profit companies attempt union-busting tactics
- increasing violence, verbal and physical abuse
- staffing, recruitment, retention
 - understaffing, high turnover, resignations, and retirements

Participants discussed work-related injuries and death, as well as mental health, psychological injury, and moral injury.

They also discussed provincial presumptive coverage for occupational injuries such as musculoskeletal injuries, cumulative stress injuries, occupational cancers, and mental health injuries. Such injuries are among the leading causes for high attrition rates among EMS workers.

Ferry and Marine Workers

Throughout 2023, NUPGE worked in coordination with the British Columbia Ferry and Marine Workers' Union (BCFMWU) to review corporate practices that harm workers in the marine sector.

This work started after the news that P&O Ferries (a British shipping company that operates ferries from the United Kingdom to Ireland, and to Continental Europe) suddenly made redundant or fired 800 of their workers. The existing crews were removed from P&O ships by an outside security firm in favour of busloads of exploited and lower-paid foreign crews. The P&O Ferries parent Company, DP World, operates in Canada, with terminal operations in Vancouver, Surrey, Prince Rupert, and Saint John.

The BCFMWU was concerned that the same corporate practices could be coming to Canada. The National Union worked with the Component to develop a strategy to ensure that this never happens in Canada. There was also concern regarding potential changes to the *Canada Shipping Act* that would have significant negative impacts on Canada's waterways and the shipping industry.

The National Union organized a videoconference of NUPGE ferry and marine workers on February 16, 2023, with 5 participants from 4 Components. The meeting highlights included the UK P&O ferry fiasco and its implications for Canada; minimum safe-staffing levels; and passenger safety management. There was a thorough discussion on staffing, recruitment, and retention for sailors: the consequences of inadequate compensation for ferry workers, the contracting out of permanent union work using private temp agencies, and how ferry service disruptions are caused by understaffing.

The ad hoc working group discussed topics such as ways to lobby government to prevent fire-and-hire scenarios, while improving Canadian cabotage. Another topic covered was advocating for labour to have input in the Minimum Safe Manning (MSM) process when applications are made to Transport Canada by vessels. And another was investigating regulatory and legislative changes for operators and owners to protect the rights of workers.

NUPGE also helped the BCFMWU with the drafting, editing, and proofing of a letter to the federal government that criticized changes to the *Canada Shipping Act* that would negatively impact union members in the marine industry. National Union President Blundon sent a letter to Minister Alghabra in solidarity with a letter sent by the BCFMWU. Blundon called on Alghabra to listen to the concerns of marine and ferry workers and to build and maintain a safe, competent, and accountable Canadian marine sector. Blundon urged Alghabra to take seriously the 9 proposed recommendations.

Indigenous Issues Committee (IIC)

The Indigenous Issues Committee (IIC) met for the first time in person on June 20, 2023, on the second day of Issues Forum #1 in Ottawa. There were 8 participants from 5 Components, and the meeting was chaired by Hali Topinka (HSABC/NUPGE).

Education and mapping of members was a common theme among Components. Most Components have some form of camp, school, conference, or educational experience that brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous members and educates non-Indigenous members on Indigenous issues.

The bulk of the meeting was spent discussing the direction of the committee and on NUPGE convention resolutions that related to Indigenous issues. The committee raised concerns with the mandate of meeting once per year. A number of convention resolutions relate to Indigenous issues, and there are other projects for the committee to work on, such as updating NUPGE's Traditional Territories Acknowledgment, developing an Elder protocol, and working on campaigns.

A videoconference was held on October 24 with 9 participants from 7 Components. Discussion continued on mapping membership demographics and the different stages Components are at in engaging with Indigenous issues. Most Components don't have a seat for an Indigenous rep on their boards. Some Components are looking at changing family and bereavement policies, updating or creating Elder policies, and discussing proficiency training for education and culture. It should be taken into consideration that Indigenous people aren't a monolith. There will be many different opinions and viewpoints held by the Indigenous members within each Component.

Committee members who had participated in the CLC's Indigenous Lobby Day in October shared a summary of the event. The CLC chose 3 topics for lobbying: 1. safe drinking water; 2. missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people; 3. honouring residential school children and their families.

Issues Forums

In 2023, NUPGE created a new event format, the Issues Forum, to bring committees and working group members together to work on common issues and priorities across groups and sectors. There were 2 Issues Forums in 2023. The Issues Forums were aimed at committee and working group members with the intent of fostering connections between different committees and working group members that would last well beyond the forums. The forums also served as a way for committees and working groups to work



together on resolutions, outcomes, and campaigns to capture intersectional experience. Both Issues Forums used the same format: an evening reception, one full day of plenary sessions for all participants, and one full day of committee or working group meetings.

The first Issues Forum, Combatting Injustice, took place in Ottawa from June 18 to 20, 2023. It brought together members of the Anti-Racism Committee, the Indigenous Issues Committee, and the new National Political Action Committee. 36 participants from 9 Components attended.

There were 3 guest speakers: Matthew Green, Member of Parliament for Hamilton Centre; Connor Smithersmapp; and Dr. Pamela Palmater. A common thread throughout the presentations was the need for meaningful, structural solutions to the systemic problems of racism, colonialism, and capitalism. Education, training, and raising awareness are important, but they are not enough on their own. In some ways, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training has been shown to be harmful (e.g., it can show racists how to be better about disguising racism at work).

On the second day, participants met in their 3 committees and then regrouped at the end of the day to reflect and wrap up. Participants shared what they learned, whether it was gaining a clearer understanding of an issue, or learning about the experiences in another province. They also shared takeaways they would be sharing with their unions. In this discussion, there was an emphasis on the need for action. A common theme was the importance of working together—across groups, sectors, provinces, and Components—and how we are stronger when we do.

NUPGE's second Issues Forum, Caring in Action: Building a More Just Future, was held in November in Toronto. It brought together members from 3 working groups: child care workers; income and social assistance workers; and social workers. On the first day, they participated in plenary sessions, beginning with a moving opening from Chief Laforme of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. President Blundon continued with powerful remarks in which he touched on how public sector workers are often on the front lines during conflict and other crises and are also part of building a better future.



Participants heard from the CCPA's Ricardo Tranjan on housing and the tenant's movement. And they heard Rabia Kheder, from Disability Without Poverty, speak about disability rights and tackling poverty. There was another session on child care by Morna Ballantyne from Child Care Now. A common thread was that we need a collective approach to these issues—treating them as public services or public goods, not as private, individual responsibilities.

On the second day, the groups moved into their working groups. Participants shared updates from their provinces and discussed issues in their sectors and workplaces. While provinces, sectors, and workplaces each have their distinct situations, common challenges were identified:

- ongoing impacts of the pandemic,
- heavy workload,
- staffing shortages,
- recruitment and retention issues,
- mental health and burnout, and
- violence and harassment.

Participants reconvened for a final wrap-up session and shared their feedback and takeaways from the forum. Participants reported feeling solidarity with fellow members across the country and a sense of not being alone in dealing with the issues they face, whether in their workplaces or in their communities.

Leadership Development School

The National Union's 24th Leadership Development School took place August 19 to 25, 2023, at the Horseshoe Resort near Barrie, Ontario. This was the first in-person Leadership Development School since the COVID-19 pandemic. 21 people participated, including representatives from 8 Components and 2 international guests.

Elaine Bernard, the former executive director of the Harvard University Labor and Worklife Program, delivered the core program. Other sessions examined the changing environment for the labour movement in Canada. These included sessions on what unions can do to fight racism, climate change, and improve union governance. In many of these sessions, discussions were focused on how the labour movement can ensure no one is left behind.

Legal Strategies Component Coordinating Committee (LSCCC)

The LSCCC met twice virtually. The committee brings together Components' in-house counsel and external counsel to discuss legal issues. Participants share updates from their provinces and unions. They discuss, and share analysis on, issues and cases of common interest from across the country. NUPGE's legal counsel attends these meetings and offers updates and analysis. Between meetings, NUPGE shares updates or materials on notable cases.

Essential services legislation was a major topic of discussion, as were the number of strikes this year. The LSCCC reviewed the federal anti-scab legislation that was introduced this fall, legislation the labour movement has long called for. The committee discussed the Saskatchewan government's use of the notwithstanding clause to push through its so-called parental rights legislation in October, which legislation NUPGE responded to with letters to both the provincial and federal governments.

Other notable cases were the Alberta Labour Relations Board decision affirming pension rights for HSAA members and a Supreme Court of Canada case on defamation involving a union leader. COVID-19 issues continued to be topics of discussion, as decisions are reached in grievances and in arbitration cases related to vaccine mandates, for example, but these seem to be winding down.

National Political Action Committee

The National Political Action Committee (NPAC) met for the first time in person on June 20, 2023, on day 2 of the Issues Forum #1 in Ottawa. There were 16 participants from 7 Components. Chairing duties were shared by Mike Parker (HSAA/NUPGE), Sandra Mullen (NSGEU/NUPGE), and Jason MacLean, NUPGE's Secretary-Treasurer. The focus of discussion was how political action work has changed in recent years. This included looking at the legislation and regulations governing union activity during election campaigns and when lobbying public officials.

Scholarships

The National Union awards 9 scholarships in the amount of \$2,500 each year. All applicants must provide an essay and must be admitted to a Canadian public, post-secondary educational institution.

Applicants for the 2 Young Worker Scholarships may apply as members. All the other scholarships are available only to the children/grandchildren and foster children/grandchildren or legal wards of one our members and/or the retirees of our Components or of a Component's affiliate.

Except for applicants to the Young Worker Scholarships, applicants must not have earned any post-secondary credits and must be starting their first year of a post-secondary program on a full-time basis. But applicants for the Young Worker Scholarships may apply if they are currently enrolled, or have previously received post-secondary credits. They must be under the age of 30 at the time of the scholarship cut-off date.

The following were awarded in November 2022:

Brian Fudge Memorial Scholarship—Melissa Trinh, OPSEU/SEFPO
Scholarship for Black Students—Eliana Legesse, MGEU
Scholarship for Indigenous Students—Carmen Shea, HSABC
Scholarship for 2SLGBTQIA+ Students—Maya Taylor, BCGEU
Scholarship for Students of Colour—Malaya Douglas, NSGEU



Terry Fox Memorial Scholarship—Sofia Begg, OPSEU/SEFPO

Tommy Douglas Scholarship—Lareina Shen, NSGEU

Young Worker Scholarships—Sarah Graham, BCGEU, and Natalie Kathler, MGEU

Probation and Parole Officers

A working group session was held for NUPGE probation and parole officers in Ottawa on October 26 to 27, 2023, with 10 participants from 5 Components.

Among the notable aspects of the meeting was a discussion about mental health and psychological injury, which was stimulated by a presentation by the invited guest, Amy Fogarty of the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC).

Fogarty presented the work of MHCC to develop an action plan on mental health and criminal justice. Following the presentation, participants raised questions and offered their comments on the proposed MHCC Action Plan. Many shared their own personal testimonials and experiences to explain the reasons for high levels of mental/psychological injury and moral injury among probation and parole workers. Mental health deteriorates not necessarily because of the work responsibilities per se, but because of overtime and increasing workload complexity. It's also due to other exacerbating factors, such as arbitrary policy changes, and staffing problems.

They talked about the urgent need to care for the mentally injured. Participants complained that it's the employer's responsibility to ensure a healthy workplace, but they are not taking responsibility. Instead, the onus is on workers to boost morale and take training. It was generally agreed that, when it comes to mental health, the employer is only concerned with optics, so they can pretend to care, an approach participants described as lip service.

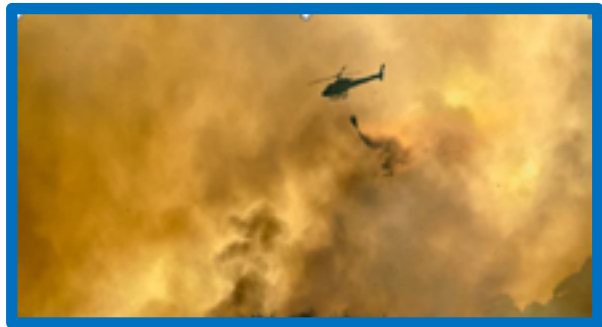
Other topics of discussion were the following:

- Update on opioids/poison drugs (such as fentanyl) in the workplace
- Update on collective bargaining and grievances
- Staffing (recruitment, retention, and shortages) and staffing models
- Core correctional practices
- Field Work and community-based offender monitoring and compliance checks
- Field work—the type probation and parole officers are engaging in with clients in the community
- Health and safety precautions and policies—what types are being used
- Supervision conditions, how are house arrest, curfews, residence, non-association conditions being monitored?
- PO compliance checks in the community—are they performing them? And if so, what health and safety controls are being used?

Wildland Firefighters

A Wildland Firefighters' Working Session was held on November 16 to 17, 2023, in Ottawa, with 16 participants from 7 Components.

The working session commenced with a comprehensive review of the 2023 fire season, including the intensity of fires, the number of fires, and the duration of the season. Except for the provinces of New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador, participants reported that this was a season in which conditions were hotter and drier than ever before. In some parts of the country, the season started as early as February, and in others, in April, and continued well into November. In some cases, there were over 90 days of deployments. Some reported the worst year on record, with instances of entrapment scenarios, several fatalities, and numerous injuries. It was suggested that many of the wildfires have been bigger than ever because of climate change.



There were 3 agenda items discussed under the topics of Occupational Health and Safety—Occupational Hazards and Injuries:

1. Psychological/mental health injuries, and physical injuries

Participants talked extensively about the hazards and injuries that firefighters suffer, especially among the young and inexperienced recruits, who are the workers increasingly most employed. Like structural, or municipal, firefighters, wildland firefighters are regularly exposed to traumatic and dangerous events on the job.

2. Regulating safety in wildland firefighting

Participants talked about adding a section to provincial/territorial occupational health and safety regulations that would incorporate more robust requirements or measures for employers to manage and avoid hazards (physical and mental) in the workplace.

3. National reporting system

Another topic of discussion had to do with how firefighters might coordinate, share, and keep track of information on priority occupational health and safety issues and on incident reporting.

Participants also discussed presumptive coverage for occupational injuries such as cancer and psychological/mental injury, and the government relations and lobbying efforts undertaken by provincial Components to improve such presumptive legislation.

Megan Scott, Occupational Health and Safety Officer at the BCGEU/NUPGE, presented Our path to presumptive coverage that outlined the BCGEU's successful campaign to improve presumptive

coverage for wildland firefighters. Sherry Romanado, the MP from Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, spoke about a private member's bill that she sponsored. Bill C-224, *the National Framework on Cancers Linked to Firefighting Act*, which received Royal Assent on June 22, 2023. The new legislation seeks to create a national framework within a year for the prevention and treatment of cancers, and to standardize compensation for occupational cancers.

Participants discussed NUPGE's ongoing lobby effort on pensionable earnings and pension accrual reform, that is, to include wildland firefighters under the Public Safety Occupation provisions of the federal *Income Tax Act*.

A thorough discussion was held regarding staffing, with attention to recruitment and retention.

Women in Leadership—Rise Up! Lift UP! Conference

On February 23 to 24, 2023, Women in Leadership: Rise Up! Lift Up! was held. The conference built on NUPGE's 2019 conference, Full Circle: Connecting the Generations, which looked at the many issues that all generations of Canadian women face. A key concern has been that these issues often do not get addressed because women don't have a strong enough voice at all levels of governments. The 2023 conference explored how to assist women in moving into leadership roles by examining the issues that are barriers, methods that have led to success, and how mentorship plays a critical role.



The keynote speaker Jen Hassum, Executive Director of the Broadbent Institute, opened the conference by discussing the urgent need for young women to become leaders both in politics and within the labour movement. She highlighted that, to become leaders, young women need to have mentorship and resources. Her presentation was followed by a panel discussing women's leadership in the union movement.

Lily Chang, the CLC Secretary-Treasurer, moderated a panel that included Stephanie Smith, BCGEU's President; JP Hornick, OPSEU/SEFPO's President; and Susie Proulx-Daigle, NBU's President. The panelists talked about the barriers they have faced, their experience with mentorship, their development of leadership skills, and the importance of succession planning.

Ausma Malik, councillor for Ward 10 in Toronto, and Leah Gazan, Member of Parliament for Winnipeg Centre, shared their experiences as women in a male-dominated political system. They spoke about targeted harassment of women running for political positions, and how they

developed the skills and confidence to run for political positions. Dr. Samantha Walsh, National Director of DAWN Canada, spoke to the importance of understanding and fostering diversity at all levels of leadership. She highlighted that, in order to have equality within leadership, we need to ensure that our future leaders are reflective of the diverse communities in which we live and work.

Throughout the conference, participants were given the opportunity to meet in small groups to discuss the issues. These were some of the common themes:

- Family and personal responsibilities are often a deterrent to women's participating.
- Young women need to be given information and support and purposeful spots to ensure their leadership within politics.
- Unions need to reflect diversity, which includes making spaces available for women with any accessibility needs.

Participants noted it is important that resolutions are passed at both NUPGE and CLC conventions to create spaces for diversity and equality.

NUPGE in the Broader Labour Movement

Canadian Labour Congress

Through their membership in a National Union, Component members are also affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The CLC is the largest labour central in Canada and represents 3.3 million workers.

NUPGE participates in the various committees and working groups of the CLC. We also play a significant role in their triennial constitutional convention.

The leadership at the CLC has moved quickly to reconstitute its committees and embark on some important actions since taking office in 2021. CLC committees are disbanded after each convention and then start anew shortly afterward.

Canadian Labour Congress Convention—May 8 to 12, 2023, Montreal, QC

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) held its 30th Constitutional Convention in Montreal. Delegates from affiliated unions across Canada and in Quebec sent delegates to debate a wide range of issues. The theme of the convention was Lifting Everyone Up.

NUPGE sent around 450 delegates to the convention, the largest in our history, and was the affiliate with the most delegates in



attendance. Our members made a significant contribution to the debates at the microphones during the 4-day convention.

In particular, a constitutional amendment championed by NUPGE passed. It changes the manner in which affiliated unions choose delegates for the convention by introducing the model of representation by membership.

At this convention, NUPGE was also proud to support the return to leadership of Team Unite:

- Bea Bruske for President
- Lily Chang for Secretary-Treasurer
- Siobhán Vipond and Larry Rousseau for Executive Vice-Presidents

CLC Disability Rights Working Group

The CLC held one meeting of the Disability Rights Working Group in 2023. Arlene Phillips (OPSEU/SEFPO/NUPGE), who is the CLC's VP for Workers with Disabilities, and Lily Chang, the CLC's Secretary-Treasurer, co-chair the working group. Working group members discussed the relevant CLC convention resolutions and will rank the resolutions by priority in a future poll. Working group members also put forward a motion for the CLC to call for a cease fire in Gaza, so that humanitarian aid can reach Palestinians with disabilities.

There was a presentation by Seema Lamba (PSAC) and Emmanuelle Lopez (UFCW) on the draft of the Federal Standards on Accessible Employment, part of the *Accessible Canada Act*.

Currently, applying the Standards is voluntary and only affects federally regulated organizations. But the goal is that the Standards will become national and regulated. It was suggested that unions pay attention to the Standards and become proactive by incorporating them into collective agreements, or make fact sheets to explain how adopting the Standards strengthens the workplace.

The CLC announced that CUPW's [Disability Supports portal](#) has been launched. It pulls data from [211](#), Canada's primary source of information for government and community-based, non-clinical health and social services. The portal acts as a searchable database for supports related to disabilities. CUPW is encouraging unions to add a portal icon or banner to their websites.

CLC Education Advisory Committee

Much of the discussion focused on hybrid teaching. There are both advantages and drawbacks to online teaching and hybrid teaching. Pros and cons were reviewed. The main takeaway is that content is key. If the content is not relevant and engaging, no in-person or online tools will improve retention rates for students.

CLC Environment Advisory Committee

The committee met once in 2023. At this meeting, participants discussed issues of national and international importance, with CLC representatives providing updates on the committee's work and the members providing input. Participants also share the work affiliates are doing on environment and climate change.

At the national level, the Just Transition (or Sustainable Jobs) has been a priority of the CLC, as it has for many affiliates, especially with the introduction of Bill C-50, the *Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act*. Activities have included research, member engagement, lobbying, and campaigns. The committee discussed the bill and received a presentation on the CLC's ongoing project with the Pembina Institute, A Sustainable Jobs Blueprint, and heard about the Future That Works campaign. Another topic of discussion was the intersections between occupational health and safety and the environment, with climate change impacting workers in the workplace. Regarding the international level, the committee also discussed COP28.

CLC Indigenous Rights Working Group

The CLC held one meeting of the Indigenous Rights Working Group in 2023. Debra Merrier (CUPE), who is the CLC's VP for Indigenous Workers, and Lily Chang, CLC's Secretary-Treasurer, co-chair the working group. Chang gave highlights from the CLC's second Indigenous Lobby Day held on October 4.

Despite being interrupted by the election of the new Speaker of the House, 142 participants from 26 affiliates were still able to have 56 meetings.

Community outreach was mentioned in many affiliate reports. Some union leaders have committed to traveling to the north of their provinces to see the problems (lack of housing, inflation, lack of access to medical care, etc.) in the northern communities first-hand.

A large portion of the meeting was spent going through relevant CLC Convention resolutions and discussing possible ways they could be fulfilled. Due to the large number of resolutions and the working group's infrequent meeting schedule, it was decided that a subcommittee would be formed to meet more regularly and work on the resolutions.

The CLC has developed new courses and facilitator training for Indigenous workers and workers of colour. Commitment from union leadership will be needed, but the current plan is to deliver the courses over 1-2 weeks during the spring and summer sessions of the CLC Regional Schools.

CLC International Group

*In undertaking our work on international issues and solidarity, NUPGE works with allies through

the CLC International Group. Through this working group, CLC affiliates share information, discuss issues they are working on, and coordinate where appropriate. For example, NUPGE has often been involved in work related to Colombia. The group holds virtual meetings about 4 times per year. At these meetings, the CLC also provides updates from the international bodies it participates in, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). There are often presentations or workshops on topics of interest.

CLC Legal Challenges Coordinating Committee

Leigh Sprague of the New Brunswick Union (NBU) represents NUPGE on this committee as co-chair. This committee works to build cooperation and coordination among labour allies to take legal challenges forward for labour rights. Affiliates also share updates on important cases and decisions that impact workers and unions, similar to what NUPGE's own Legal Strategies Component Coordinating Committee does.

CLC National Political Action Committee

In 2023, the timing for the CLC Lobby on the Hill was changed from February to November. Holding the lobby day in November means that labour activists can have more impact on the federal budget process, but it also meant that there were 2 lobby days in 2023. Priorities for the lobby days included the need for anti-scab legislation and for investments in the care economy, in pharmacare, and in sustainable jobs.

Discussion topics included how to ensure that the *Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act* provides workers with a strong voice in the decision-making process. Another problem is the approach that both Liberals and Conservatives are taking to control the deficit. Their approach is to cut spending on services working people rely on instead of increasing government revenues by introducing tax fairness measures to ensure the wealthy and large corporations pay their share.

CLC Pension Advisory Committee

The CLC Pension Advisory Committee has been looking at consultations being held at the federal level on pension-related issues. The federal Department of Finance is holding consultations on disclosure rules for federally regulated pensions. Parliamentary committees have discussed whether action should be taken to encourage or require pension plans to increase the percentage of their funds that are invested in Canada.

There has also been discussion about the flaws in the Alberta government's proposal to pull out of the Canada Pension Plan and how to make sure Albertans have accurate information about the risks involved.

CLC Task Force on Anti-2SLGBTQI+ Hate

At the 2023 CLC convention, NUPGE submitted an Emergency Resolution on Anti-hate due to an alarming rise in hate, threats, and intimidation aimed at 2SLGBTQIA+ workers and workers in libraries and schools that host drag story time events. The resolution passed, and the Task Force on Anti-2SLGBTQI+ Hate met for the first time in June 2023. There were 4 additional meetings held in 2023.



The mandate of the CLC Emergency Task Force is to advise the CLC regarding efforts to address the rise of anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate and to develop a guide outlining health and safety tools for affiliates to ensure the safety of workers where events occur. It is not a permanent task force, but it follows the same rules as CLC committees. Gina McKay (CUPE), who is the CLC's VP for 2SLGBTQI+ Workers, and Larry Rousseau (CLC Executive Vice-President) co-chair the task force.

With input from task force members, the CLC has developed an Anti-hate Health and Safety Guide. The target audience for the guide is unions and union representatives. The guide is to help them to learn how to use health and safety regulations and procedures to address the rise of hate. The CLC is also partnering with the [Canadian Anti-Hate Network](#) to create a labour toolkit. Additionally, the CLC will build anti-hate into their pre-election messaging. It was stressed that education is of top importance.

At each meeting participants gave updates on hate events in their regions and how their unions and grassroots organizers were combating them. In particular, the national hate events on September 20 and October 10 was a protest outside the Saskatchewan legislature in opposition to the so-called Parents' Bill of Rights.

As the hate movement grows, several affiliates reported that some members are being punished by their employers for drag work they do outside of their unionized job. Addressing 2SLGBTQIA+ hate in bargaining with general anti-harassment language isn't enough; members and potential members need to know that they have access to union protection on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

CLC Training and Technology Advisory Committee

2 issues of particular concern to NUPGE members that the Training and Technology Advisory Committee looked at were proposed legislation on the use of artificial intelligence and federal funding for skills training going towards micro-credential programs.

While legislation is needed to protect workers and the public from problems caused by the use of

artificial intelligence, the proposed Artificial Intelligence and Data Act (AIDA) is seen as inadequate. For that reason, that labour movement, through the CLC, has been pushing for the proposed legislation to be strengthened.

With micro-credentials, the concern is that some governments will use them to cut corners on training. Micro-credentials are supposed to provide students with a particular skill. These are often job specific and don't provide the background needed for a wide-range of jobs that people get from traditional diplomas, degrees, or certification programs. This shortchanges people in job training programs. At the same time, these programs make it easier for colleges to use casual instructors or to deliver training outside of the public college system.

PSI North America Affiliates SUBRAC 2023— September 7 to 8, 2023, Washington, DC

The meeting of PSI affiliated unions in North America included NUPGE President Bert Blundon, as well as NUPGE Vice-Presidents JP Hornick (Ontario) and Mike Parker (Alberta).

Other Canadian unions attending included COPE, CSQ, CUPE, FIQ, PSAC, SEIU, and SFPQ, with US unions AFSCME, AFT, and NNU joining. Rosa Pavanelli, General Secretary of PSI, and Euan Gibb, PSI Sub-regional Secretary, also joined the meeting.



Affiliates attending reported on issues their union was facing in their country. Some of the topics discussed included climate change, shortages of public sector workers, and wildland firefighters.

There were also updates on

- the ongoing Pandemic Treaty negotiations at WHO;
- the Just Transition and the upcoming Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting;
- global migration and recruitment of health workers, and the impacts these were having on many countries;
- PSI project on digitization and the creation of the Digital Bargaining Hub and Negotiation Tools; and
- pension fund capitalism and privatization.

PSI World Congress—October 12 to 18, 2023, Geneva, Switzerland

Representing NUPGE at the world congress was President Bert Blundon, Secretary-Treasurer Jason MacLean, and NUPGE Vice-Presidents JP Hornick (Ontario) and Mike Parker (Alberta) as well as Managing Director Len Bush.

There were 785 delegates and 147 observers, representing 369 affiliated organizations from 127 countries in attendance.



The congress gathers every 5 years, and the theme for 2024 was People Over Profit in a World of Multiple Crises. The congress saw the stepping down of Rosa Pavanelli and David Prentice and the elections of Daniel Bertossa as PSI General Secretary, and Britta Lejon as President.

NUPGE played strong role in establishing a global LGBTQA+ coordinating committee, with a liaison person and observer at the PSI Executive Board. This change was passed after heated discussions and moving contributions from comrades across the world.

Of special interest were a number of pre-congress forums and network meetings on a wide range of issues, including climate change, global migration, the pandemic treaty, LGBTQA+ workers, and more.

The next World Congress is slated for 2028, but a location has yet to be announced.

PSI Inter-America Health Federation—December 5 to 7, 2023, São Paulo, Brazil

More than 70 health sector leaders from 15 countries met for 3 days in São Paulo from December 5 to 7, 2023.. This was the second in-person meeting of the body following a few virtual meetings.

At this meeting, the draft plan of action for the region was adopted. Representatives from the regions for the steering committee were appointed. NUPGE's Secretary-Treasurer Jason MacLean is one of Canada's representatives on the steering committee. The next meeting is being planned for the fall in South America. The dates and location are yet to be announced.

NUPGE Working with Our Allies

Canadian Health Coalition

Through its seat on the board, NUPGE has been working with the Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) for over 40 years to protect, strengthen, and preserve our public health care system. The CHC remains robust and brings together a diverse group of labour and community organizations committed to our public health care system.

The CHC held a lobby in March of 2023 where public health care activists met with over 60 MPs and Senators. NUPGE had the largest contingent of participants, with over 30 attending. The reports from members suggested that this lobby was worth supporting.



The CHC is in the midst of a leadership change, with its longtime chair, Pauline Worsfold, due to step down in the second quarter of 2024. It is unclear who will take on the role of chair. It is positive that the CHC staff are a full contingent and able to strongly support whoever the new chair will be.

The CHC has supported actions that NUPGE's involved in for the fight against paid plasma and the fight for pharmacare.

The provincial health coalitions are pushing back strongly against privatization, but it is a struggle in places like Ontario and Alberta. There is clearly a need for all health care advocates and organizations to work together with these provinces, because governments, unopposed, will expand this model of privatized health care and undermine our public health care system.

The CHC has a number of subcommittees that NUPGE sits on, such as subcommittees for pharmacare and long-term care.

Canadian Peace Officers' Memorial Association

NUPGE continues to be a member of the executive committee of the Canadian Peace Officers' Memorial Association (CPOMA). The CPOMA organizes an annual Peace Officers' Memorial Service in Ottawa on Parliament Hill that honours peace officers murdered in the line of duty. Many NUPGE peace officers from across Canada, particularly workers in corrections (institutional and

community corrections), attend the annual service, which takes place on the third Sunday in September. In 2023, the CPOMA had 2 executive meetings: June 15 and Dec 7.

Canadians for Tax Fairness

With the federal government and provincial governments claiming they can't afford the public services Canadian families need and can't afford to treat their workers fairly, tax fairness is more important than ever. The extra revenue that can be generated by ensuring that large corporations and the wealthy pay their share can help us fund public services and the transition to a low-carbon economy.

It is also a matter of fairness. While front-line workers were making huge sacrifices during the COVID-19 pandemic, the wealthy were getting richer than ever. Instead of asking front-line workers to make more sacrifices, governments need to do their bit.

For these reasons, tax fairness is a high priority for the National Union. We continue to strongly support the work of [Canadians for Tax Fairness \(C4TF\)](#). C4TF has done excellent work pushing governments to make the tax system fairer. While it has been an uphill fight, they have won a number of victories. They have also been a valuable resource for the labour movement and others concerned about tax fairness.

In the last year, NUPGE has also used other forums to promote tax fairness. The National Union's submission to consultations on the 2024 federal budget called for tax-fairness measures to ensure that the billionaires and large corporations that became wealthier than ever during the pandemic finally contribute their share.

Ceasefire Now

Following the October 7 Hamas attack in Israel, which killed about 1,200 people and took 240 hostages, NUPGE responded with an initial [statement](#). The statement condemned the attack, as well as the brutal retribution by Israel against Palestinians, and called for respect of international law, which prohibits attacks on any civilians.

As Israel's bombardment of Gaza intensified, and the humanitarian situation became dire, NUPGE joined a coalition of labour, faith, Arab, Jewish, and civil society organizations in releasing the joint [Ceasefire Now statement](#) on October 21. It called for an immediate ceasefire, a safe return of hostages, and an end to the blockade of Gaza and the restoration of aid and necessities of life. The coalition also called for efforts towards a just and lasting peace in Israel-Palestine and ending Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands.



NUPGE sent a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau outlining these demands. This fall, NUPGE also contributed funds to Oxfam to support the urgently needed humanitarian relief in Gaza and engaged in solidarity with Palestinian workers through a Public Services International (PSI) meeting. Following the October 21 statement, NUPGE continued to work with the Ceasefire Now coalition and supported pan-Canadian days of action on November 12 and December 17. There were numerous actions across the country calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, an end to blockading Gaza, and for restoring the flow of humanitarian aid. By the end of 2023, Israel's bombardment and siege had killed over 20,000 Palestinians, most of whom are civilians.

Child Care Now

NUPGE is a member of Child Care Now, the national child care advocacy organization. Child Care Now advocates for a publicly funded, inclusive, quality, non-profit child care system. Child Care Now has been involved in the efforts to build a Canada-wide child care system, monitoring the implementation of the bilateral agreements, and pressuring governments to address gaps. Child Care Now has also worked to shape the *Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act*, as has NUPGE. Child Care Now also works with provincial advocacy coalitions and has supported capacity-building for new or revived groups.



NUPGE supported the annual National Day of Action on Early Learning and Child Care organized by Child Care Now on November 30, 2023. Although historic federal funding has meant a reduction in child care fees, many families still can't access affordable, high-quality child care. The shortage of qualified workers is a major barrier. The day of action highlighted these issues and called for government action to address them.

Climate Action Network

NUPGE is a member of Climate Action Network Canada (CAN-Rac), a coalition of organizations—for environment, labour, faith groups, and civil society groups. NUPGE participates in CAN-Rac meetings, during which members discuss national and regional policy updates and share research, campaigns, and other initiatives. Climate justice is a priority for CAN-Rac, which is evident in its policy work on advancing a Just Transition, and in its internal work, organizing a series of anti-oppression workshops for network members.

CAN-Rac does education, analysis, and advocacy related to federal policy. CAN-Rac is engaged in almost every aspect of climate policy. A major focus this year has been the oil and gas emissions cap, which was finally announced in December. CAN-Rac also engages in climate issues and policy in the international sphere. This fall and winter, COP28 was a major focus. CAN-Rac provides briefings, analysis, and logistics support to member organizations, as well as coordinating those participating on the ground. NUPGE participated in these efforts.

COP28

On the global stage, NUPGE participated in COP28, the UN climate summit. COP is where countries come together to tackle the climate crisis. Unions like NUPGE go to COP, alongside allies in the environmental movement and in civil society organizations, to represent workers and to ensure that workers' rights and perspectives are part of the discussion. COP is an important opportunity to not only try to shape the outcomes of negotiations but also to build relationships and solidarity with allies around the world as we coordinate and exchange with them.



In this year's final agreement, countries committed to transition away from fossil fuels, finally recognizing fossil fuels as the source of the emissions causing climate change. The commitments fell short of the level of ambition we urgently need, with work remaining on the Just Transition, climate finance, and adaptation support, but important steps were made. Building on NUPGE's work at COP28, from government relations to building solidarity with allies, we will continue efforts at home to hold the Canadian government accountable and advance climate action and climate justice.

Green Economy Network

The Green Economy Network (GEN) is a coalition from labour, environmental and social justice groups working to build a green economy in Canada. Through GEN, member organizations share updates on their work and coordinate where appropriate.

This year, GEN continued its work of updating and sharing its key policy document, known as the Common Platform, which has 3 pillars: clean transit, renewable energy, and green buildings. GEN also convened a webinar on the federal Sustainable Jobs Plan announced in the spring.

This fall, GEN held its first in-person meeting since 2020. At the all-members meeting, participants shared updates on their work. There were also panels on green industrial policy and on GEN's Common Platform, as well as a discussion on Bill C-50, the *Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act*. As a member, NUPGE participates in these meetings and events and has provided input on GEN statements, materials, and government submissions. This year, NUPGE took on a more active role by joining the steering committee of the network.

International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group

The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG) is a national coalition of civil society organizations that works to defend civil liberties and human rights, especially in the context of anti-terrorism laws and national security activities. The coalition brings together NGOs, unions, faith groups, human rights groups, and others. ICLMG produces educational materials, writes submissions to government, meets with MPs and government officials, engages in actions and campaigns, and facilitates coordination amongst coalition members.



ICLMG has been active on work related to artificial intelligence, facial recognition technology, surveillance, and privacy. ICLMG has been advocating for independent review processes for national security and intelligence agencies. As part of its work on the treatment of Canadians detained abroad, ICLMG continues its advocacy for Hassan Diab, as NUPGE has, and campaigns on Canadians detained in Northeastern Syria. ICLMG works to oppose racial, religious, and other forms of profiling by national security laws and activities, especially toward Muslim and Arab communities and people of colour. ICLMG continues to raise awareness on prejudiced audits of Muslim charities.

Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), Advisory Committee—National Action Plan on Mental Health and Criminal Justice

The MHCC is developing and implementing a National Action Plan (NAP) on mental health and criminal justice “to recognize and address the mental health needs of people who come into contact with the criminal justice system.” This NAP is supposed to include those who work in the system, and those who face criminal justice. Furthermore, it includes identifying the needs and considerations of priority populations (e.g., Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, and women) and working to mitigate the impacts of colonialism, racism, and other forms of oppression.

To assist in the development and implementation of an NAP, the MHCC invited NUPGE to join with 21 experts on a Development Advisory Committee to give strategic advice, opinion, feedback, and to provide expertise to MHCC and “ultimately co-create” the action plan.

There were 5 videoconference meetings in 2023: January 24; April 20; June 13; October 4; and November 27. NUPGE will continue to participate in meetings of the Development Advisory Committee to ensure that the action plan implements the concerns of our members working in the justice system.

Trade Justice Network, and Trade and Investment Research Project

The National Union continues to work in solidarity with labour and civil society allies in regular meetings. The purpose is to share research and to promote collective action on the impact of global trade and investor rights agreements on our economic and democratic institutions. To this end, NUPGE is engaged with 2 coalitions: 1. the Trade and Investment Research Project (TIRP), and 2. the Trade Justice Network (TJN). The primary focus of TIRP is to share information and research, and the aim of the TJN is political advocacy and action.

The National Union's involvement in these important coalitions allows us to join forces with allies to defend the public interest against expanding corporate rights, power, and influence. The National Union believes these agreements remove public safeguards, threaten public safety, erode democracy, and undermine environmental laws and regulations. They also erode quality public services through specific mechanisms designed to lock in liberalization and privatization.

In 2023, both coalitions raised awareness and provided critical intelligence about several global investment regimes, including ones to which the Government of Canada is a party:

- Canada-US-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA)
- Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, formerly TPP
- Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)

With CUSMA, there was a continuing close examination in 2023 of certain complaints falling under the enforceable dispute-settlement mechanisms in the agreement:

- US dispute with Mexico regarding labour reform efforts targeting violations of workers' rights to organize and collectively bargain.
- Mexico's complaints against the US regarding the rights of migrant workers (discrimination and sexual harassment in temporary work programs for migrants).
- Mexico's dispute with the US over differing interpretations of rules of origin for automotive vehicles.
- The ruling against Canada regarding tariff-rate quotas for dairy products.
- Canada's dispute with the US with respect to tariffs on solar products from Canada.
- US dispute with Mexico (joined by Canada) regarding restrictions on the use of genetically engineered corn in tortilla and flour production.

Regarding the WTO, there was continued discussion in 2023 on issues such as whether the WTO can be reformed. One reform needed was to ensure fair trade between different countries at various stages of development. Another was to implement the socio-ecological transformation that is urgently needed in the face of various environmental and social crises. Also discussed was how plurilateral negotiations (Joint Statement Initiatives) on digital trade, domestic regulation of

services, and investment facilitation backed by rich countries undermine this objective. The WTO's TRIPS waiver was also discussed.

With our TIRP and TJN allies, in 2023, the National Union continued to monitor the situation in ongoing negotiations for new trade and investment regimes.

Trade Unions for Energy Democracy

NUPGE participates in Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED), a global initiative. TUED aims to advance the democratic direction and control of energy systems in order to address the climate crisis, energy poverty, the degradation of both land and people, and to respond to the attacks on workers' rights and protections. TUED produces research and hosts forums to discuss key issues and highlight experiences around the world.

This year TUED released research papers that outlined the role that public ownership of energy systems can play in tackling energy poverty and the climate crisis and advancing a Just Transition. TUED has also been working on establishing TUED South, launched last year, which brings together unions in the Global South. NUPGE met with TUED representatives this summer to discuss their work, the experiences of NUPGE members, and opportunities to collaborate.

Major Issues (NUPGE and the Future)

Anti-privatization

Fighting privatization remains a priority for the National Union. A videoconference on October 17, 2023, for Component researchers, communications staff, and campaigners working to fight privatization focused on the damage privatization is doing to the health care system.

This included a presentation on the failed privatization of community lab services by the Alberta government. There was also discussion on the link between the health human resources crisis and privatization.

Sector-specific work done by NUPGE has also addressed the threat posed by privatization. These sectors include health care and liquor and cannabis distribution.

The National Union continues to provide materials drawing attention to the problems with privatization. This includes website stories on how the [use of for-profit surgical clinics is driving up the cost of health care](#) and the [costs to the public of liquor store privatization](#).

Black Class Action Lawsuit

In 2020, a class action lawsuit was filed in the Federal Court of Canada on behalf of Black Canadians. The lawsuit is seeking long-term solutions to permanently address systemic racism and discrimination in the Public Service of Canada.

The case is directed at self-identifying Black individuals who applied for employment with the Public Service of Canada and were denied entry based on their race. It also includes those who were employed but were denied promotions based on their race. This refers to current

employees and to those who have been employed within the past 52 years. Damages include the wrongful failure to promote, intentional infliction of mental suffering, constructive dismissal, wrongful termination, negligence, and in particular, violations of employment law and human rights law, and Charter breaches.



At the September NEB meeting, Nicholas Marcus Thompson, Executive Director at the Black Class Action Secretariat (BCAS), presented an overview of the Black class action lawsuit. At the conclusion of the presentation, Thompson requested a donation of \$250,000 that would enable him to work full-time on the lawsuit and for BCAS, and for BCAS to hire an executive assistant. The NEB approved the request.

Global Trade and Investment Deals Continue to Threaten Public Services

Contemporary free trade agreements are supposed to facilitate trade and foreign investment by removing trade barriers, like tariffs. But removing tariffs is a very small part of these agreements. They do a lot more than that: they're primarily investor rights agreements endowing extraordinary rights, protections, immunities, and powers to foreign investors and capital. For this reason, we should call them trade and investment agreements (TIAs).

TIAs undermine our ability to legislate in the public interest. They threaten public safety, erode quality public services, and undermine environmental laws and regulations. They do this by

- weakening and reducing regulatory oversight, democratic control, and public safeguards;
- giving private investors the power to sue governments in private dispute settlement panels through specific mechanisms designed to lock-in privatization.

Long-Term Care

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the failure of Canada's Long-Term Care (LTC) sector. Over 15,800 residents died during the first waves of the pandemic, and Canada has the world's highest percentage of pandemic deaths in LTC. In 2022, when Canada was over 2 years into the pandemic, and after the terrible failures we had witnessed in LTC, Canada was still not adequately protecting our most vulnerable elderly and infirm. NUPGE has been pressing governments to act to ensure better care for LTC residents and to address the stark failure of LTC in Canada.

NUPGE has been at the forefront of calling for changes in LTC and has been pressing the federal government to bring LTC under the *Canada Health Act* (CHA). NUPGE even provided the federal government with polling showing that Canadians overwhelmingly supported bringing LTC under the public health care system. We have worked with allies, including the Canadian Health Coalition, and within organized labour and the Canadian Labour Congress to champion these changes. NUPGE, in all our correspondence with the Prime Minister and federal Health Minister on LTC and health care, has continued to press the government to act.

Unfortunately, we expect the legislation to be disappointing and inadequate to actually protect our most vulnerable patients. NUPGE continues to be concerned that the federal government promises of a Safe Long-Term Care Act and national standards are proving hollow.

The Health Standards Organization's (HSO) draft standards are vague and do not even guarantee minimum hours of care for patients. NUPGE called on Minister Duclos to take over the process of developing the LTC standards, because the HSO is a private organization. NUPGE believes the standards for LTC must be the responsibility of governments to create, monitor, and enforce.

NUPGE took our concerns directly to Health Canada during a November meeting that was facilitated by the CLC and included other interested unions.

Climate Change

In June, NUPGE launched an online campaign, Climate Change at Work. It has a dedicated [webpage](#) with a list of resources, featuring a series of backgrounders on tackling the climate crisis, and videos. We also launched with a [story-sharing action](#) that invited workers to share how they are feeling the effects of climate change. This aims to engage our members—and workers more broadly—on how climate change is a workplace issue. The [quotes and testimonials shared](#) also help to profile workers' lived experiences with climate impacts and their ideas for how to respond.

In the fall, we added a letter-writing action focused on Bill C-50, the *Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act*. This is the legislation dealing with a Just Transition, which the federal government has been promising since 2019, and NUPGE has been advocating for. Using an online tool, individuals could send a message to their MP urging them to strengthen the act, and Canada's Just Transition plans

more broadly. This would ensure that all workers and their communities are supported through the transition to a green economy and are actively part of making the decisions and policies that will facilitate this transition. The Climate Change at Work campaign will continue into 2024.



Crisis in Provincial Criminal Justice Systems

Canada's provincial criminal justice systems are in crisis for workers and inmates. Too many correctional facilities are dilapidated, old, and crumbling, with unsanitary and inhumane living conditions. They are dangerously overcrowded, and they have poor ventilation and low-quality air filtration, which have led to dozens of COVID-19 outbreaks.

Correctional facilities have become institutions of last resort for people with addictions and mental health issues. These institutions offer limited access to adequate treatment programs or rehabilitation services.

What all this means for front-line corrections workers is exposure to extremely dangerous work environments with serious health and safety risks, especially exposure to COVID-19. There are daily incidents of violence directly related to overcrowding. And officers have no special training on how to deal with offenders with mental health or addictions issues. In addition, there are not enough correctional nurses to cope these situations.

There's a critical shortage of correctional officers. And there are problems recruiting and retaining for all categories of corrections workers.

It should therefore come as no surprise that correctional workers suffer from mental injury. They are almost 5.5 times more likely than the general population, and rank highest among all public safety personnel, to screen positive for clinically significant symptoms consistent with one or more mental disorders.

In 2023, the National Union continued to

- work with Components to defend and promote the rights of all justice workers;
- condemn the ongoing overcrowding crisis in provincial and federal correctional facilities;
- highlight the crisis of understaffing and of retention and recruitment due to inadequate compensation, poor health and safety standards, and violence against justice workers;
- work with Components to lobby federal and provincial governments to improve the working conditions of justice workers;
- work with Components to develop and coordinate actions and communications strategies addressing the crisis in provincial criminal justice systems;
- educate the public that incarcerating people with addictions and mental illness is an inhumane, unacceptable, and unjust policy response to inadequate community mental health supports;
- work with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) to create an action plan that protects the mental and physical health and safety of workers and all those who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Domestic Violence

The Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI) continues to highlight the need for better funding for shelters and transition houses, affordable housing, public services for both those escaping violence and those perpetuating the violence. There is also the need for education within our school systems to reinforce that violence should never be used.

The ACWI is pleased that, due to pressure from unions, women's groups, and domestic violence groups, there is domestic violence leave in all provinces and territories. The committee will continue to work to ensure that the domestic violence leave is paid.

The CLC has updated its material on their Domestic Violence at Work initiative, which will be shared with the ACWI and NUPGE's facilitators for the course.

Pandemic Treaty

On December 7, 2023, the presidents of 7 of the largest labour unions in Canada and Quebec joined forces to [send a letter to Minister of Health Mark Holland](#) and other MPs demanding amendments to an international agreement on pandemic prevention known as the Pandemic Treaty. The letter-writing campaign was an act of labour union solidarity unprecedented in many years. It was spearheaded by NUPGE Secretary-Treasurer Jason MacLean while he was at the December meeting of Public Services International (PSI) in Brazil.

The signatory unions are all members of PSI that represent health workers and care workers. Collectively, they represent more than 500,000 workers who provide services in every aspect of the health care sector. The joint letter is signed by COPE President Annette Toth, CUPE National President Mark Hancock, CSQ President Éric Gingras, FIQ President Julie Bouchard, NUPGE President Bert Blundon, PSAC President Chris Aylward, and SEIU Healthcare President Sharleen Stewart.

In the letter, the Presidents expressed concern that the first session of the seventh round of discussions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB7) held November 6 to 10 did not adequately address key priorities for health workers and care workers. The 6-page letter urges the Minister of Health to address several key points during the resumed INB7 session December 4 to 8 2023:



- Uphold the right to decent work for health workers and care workers.
- Ensure public financing for public goods.
- Waive patent rights in all cases of public health emergencies.
- Ensure everyone shares and everyone benefits.
- Strengthen health systems to prevent health emergencies.
- Include the climate crisis as a central priority to be considered in all pandemic and hazard preparedness and response programs.

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Body is a process to draft and negotiate an international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, also known as the WHO Pandemic Treaty. The Presidents worked on the letter with the support of Public Services International (PSI), the global union federation representing public services, health care workers, and care workers around the world, to which we are affiliated.

Global Movement to Suspend the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)

The COVID-19 pandemic was supposed to engender global solidarity, as evident in the slogan, “No one is safe until everyone is safe.” However, with respect to vaccines and vaccine technology, what emerged was global protectionism and inequality.

In 2020, a handful of multinational pharmaceutical companies were granted tens of billions of dollars in public funding to promote the research and development of COVID-19 vaccines. Instead of sharing the technology, and bringing a swift end to the pandemic, these companies were granted exclusive monopoly rights over the technologies and vaccines they developed.

This vaccine profiteering by US and Europe-based brand-name pharmaceutical companies was facilitated by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its rules on intellectual property known as TRIPS: the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

TRIPS is a comprehensive multilateral international legal agreement binding all WTO member states to stringent intellectual property (IP) rules initially drafted by Big Pharma and supported primarily by the US, Europe, and Japan. The TRIPS regime is essentially a free licence for pharmaceutical companies to accumulate staggering profits, while people in the Global South are denied access to vaccines and vaccine technology.

To end this grotesque inequality, a global campaign for a TRIPS waiver was launched in late 2020 by a coalition of states and civil society organizations, including the World Health Organization, Médecins Sans Frontières, and Public Services International. Canada was one of a small group of states that refused to support a waiver, undermining the campaign. Eventually a limited, and possibly unusable, TRIPS clarification related to generic vaccine exports was produced.

The movement is now demanding that the WTO member states expand this limited decision to cover COVID-19-related medicines and technologies. The goal is to make these essential goods available cheaply to all countries, as proposed during the WTO's 12th ministerial conference in Geneva in 2022. Once again, it appears that Canada opposes this expansion, making it hard for citizens in the Global South to receive the same level of COVID-19 protection that Canadians have.

Income Inequality

The situation we face today is very similar to the challenge we faced when NUPGE first started to talk about income inequality. When NUPGE started its efforts to draw attention to income inequality, Canada and other countries were debating who would pay for the 2007–2008 financial crisis.

While banks and investment firms caused the crisis and received billions in bailouts during the crisis, the very wealthy were arguing that low- and middle-income people should foot the bill through the implementation of austerity policies.

Today the debate is about who should pay for the COVID-19 pandemic. While front-line workers made huge sacrifices, large corporations and billionaires became richer than ever during the pandemic. Yet, instead of accepting that it's time for those whose wealth skyrocketed during the pandemic to do their bit, those who benefit from income inequality are pushing for low- and middle-income Canadians to make even more sacrifices.

They are pushing for austerity policies that increase income inequality, like cuts to public services and increasing privatization. The world's wealthiest are responsible for a massive portion of the emissions that are causing climate change. Yet, it is the rest of us, especially those with lower

incomes or those living in poverty, that are hurt the most by the impacts of climate change. Worse, some of the super-rich are trying to delay or obstruct meaningful action on the environment. They oppose measures to protect working people as we transition to a low-carbon economy. They oppose making the tax system fairer by having large corporations and the wealthy pay their share.

And just as we did in 2007–2008, the National Union is continuing to make fighting income inequality a priority. In the 16 years that NUPGE has been taking on income inequality, there has been growing recognition that income inequality is a problem and that it can't be allowed to continue to increase. Our research, public awareness campaigns, and lobbying initiatives have shown the negative impacts income inequality has on people. We have fought for measures to fight income inequality, including expanded government services, tax fairness, and modern economic strategies.

That work is continuing. For example, in the last year as part of its work with PSI, NUPGE has started participating in Unions for Tax Justice, which provides a forum for unions around the world to work for tax fairness. The work of Unions for Tax Justice reflects the reality that when the 1% (the world's super-rich) are moving their money around the world to avoid paying their share in taxes, working people in all countries need to be working together to make it harder for them to do this.

There is also the need to make sure that the way we respond to climate change, or the way emerging technologies like artificial intelligence are used, don't increase income inequality. NUPGE members are worried about the threat posed by climate change, but they are also worried that the solutions the world's 1% want will harm their quality of life. Similarly, if controls are not placed on how employers and service providers use new technologies, they will be used to undermine labour rights and increase the gap between the very wealthy and the rest of us.

International Solidarity

NUPGE remains committed to engaging in international solidarity in a variety of areas. This includes speaking out against human rights violations, supporting humanitarian responses to crises, showing solidarity with workers and trade union movements around the world, and supporting migrant and refugee rights. NUPGE continues to support the labour and social movements in Colombia, particularly through our relationship with the Colombian lawyers' collective, CAJAR. We met with CAJAR twice this year and collaborated with them on pressuring the Colombian government regarding labour reform and stopping attacks against human rights defenders.

NUPGE has spoken out about the crisis in Gaza with a statement, and by signing on to a call for a ceasefire. NUPGE wrote to the Canadian government regarding repression and human rights violations in Iran, particularly violations of women's rights and labour rights. 2023 was a year of worker mobilization, and NUPGE expressed solidarity statements with striking public sector

workers in Italy and striking health care workers in the US. Together with other Canadian unions, NUPGE joined a solidarity effort to support Honduran garment workers who work for Gildan, a Canadian company.

NUPGE donates to international causes through its John Fryer Fund. This year, we contributed to humanitarian relief efforts in Gaza, in Sudan and neighbouring countries due to the military conflict and drought conditions, and in Turkey and Syria following a devastating earthquake. Here in Canada, we have continued to join the calls for Status for All, amplifying the demands of migrant-led groups, including applying ongoing pressure on the federal government to implement a regularization program.

Opioid-Related Poison-Drug Overdose Crisis

There's another epidemic in Canada: a public health crisis of drug overdoses. In some provinces, it's killing more people than COVID-19. In 2018, we called it an opioid crisis. Today it's a poison-drug crisis, with people unintentionally overdosing on lethal cocktails of synthetic opioids, typically fentanyl, mixed with stimulants like cocaine. The ingredients are illicit, nonpharmaceutical, nonprescription, and bootleg.

With COVID-19, overdose deaths increased dramatically for many reasons:

- unscrupulous dealers facing lack of supply contaminated their drugs with toxic additives;
- users lost access to life-saving medical supervision due to social distancing rules and a health system on the brink;
- social isolation created new users and heavier abuse.

For workers, the poison-drug crisis is a hazard to occupational health and safety. NUPGE Components have reported cases of workplace exposure, injury, illness, and hospitalization across occupational groups, especially among corrections officers, youth facility workers, paramedics, hospital staff, and front-line crisis workers.

Governments are focused on mitigating overdoses and deaths (by surveillance and enforcement), but this has failed. To reduce harm and save lives, we need to do the following:

- Stop the illicit market: amend the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* to remove the possession of opioids as an indictable offence and legalize small amounts for personal use.
- Harm-reduction strategies: provide tax-funded, medically assisted consumption sites for safe personal use, and create a regulated safe supply (providing safer substitutes under medical supervision to stop the toxic drugs causing overdoses).
- Recovery and treatment: provide tax-funded public access to addictions and mental health services—treatment on demand via the public health system.
- Guarantee pan-Canadian equal access: provide access to supplies and programs, without

- the threat of provincial barriers, by bringing them under the *Canada Health Act*.
- Stop workplace exposure: improve inmate mental health and addictions services, and stop poison drugs from entering facilities in the first place.

Pensions

The National Union's work on pensions is focused on supporting the work of our Components' pension fund trustees and pension activists and addressing issues related to federal legislation and pensions. To assist Component pension fund trustees and pension activists in their work, a Pensions Working Group meeting was held in Ottawa on November 23 to 24, 2023.

The Pensions Working Group discussed the potential impact of the United Conservative Party (UCP) government's intention to pull Alberta out of the CPP and how to best respond. As well, there were presentations on the successful fight by HSAA to protect the pensions of members working in lab services that were being privatized and the expansion of the CPP.

There was also discussion of the economic impact of public sector pension plans. While those attacking public sector workers have often tried to portray public sector pensions as unaffordable, the positive impact of these plans is that they help the economy as a whole. The positive economic impact of public sector pension plans is one more reminder that, instead of cutting public sector plans, the focus should be on expanding pension coverage for workers in the private sector.

Pension Accrual and Retirement

In 2023, the NUPGE began work to correct a long-standing issue that unfairly denies forest firefighters the same rate of pension accrual and access to retirement that firefighters who work in other locations have.

Under the National Occupation Classification, forest firefighters are not defined as firefighters, but they are classified as silviculture and forestry workers. This exclusion of forest firefighters from the official definition directly harms the economic well-being of forest firefighters by creating a built-in inequality.

Under the *Income Tax Act*, there are rules set out for how much a worker can accrue towards their pension plan (pension accrual rate), and how early a worker is allowed to retire (the retirement age). The law sets the retirement age (the earliest you can draw on your pension plan) at age 55, and the pension accrual rate (the maximum you can accrue towards that pension) is 2% per year. The *Income Tax Regulations* stipulate that under a defined benefit RPP, the maximum annual pension accrual rate applicable to any particular range of earnings cannot exceed 2%. An exemption is given "in the case of a member whose benefits are provided in respect of employment in a public safety occupation."

In recognition of the inherent dangers of certain occupations, an exemption is made in the act for 5 categories of work deemed Public Safety Occupations (PSO). In the tax regulations, a PSO is defined as "the occupation of a firefighter, police officer, corrections officer, air traffic controller, commercial airline pilot, or paramedic." An individual working under one of those exempted categories can have a 2.33% accrual rate and can retire at age 50.

The tax rules govern occupations, and the definitions of those occupations are published in an official Government of Canada document called the National Occupational Classification. Forest firefighters are specifically excluded from the list of public safety occupations. The classification defines the "main duties" that firefighters perform. And the classification lists "Employment requirements" of firefighters. As mentioned above, the classification specifically excludes the category of forest firefighter, defining them instead as silviculture and forestry workers.

Because of the way they are defined in the NOC, forest firefighters (wildland firefighters) are not considered to have a PSO designation, and so the issue is that forest firefighters cannot accrue pension at a higher rate or retire at an earlier age.

Presumptive Legislation for Occupational Psychological/Mental Injury

There is alarming data on mental injury among Justice Workers (JWs). Credible scientific evidence published in reputable Canadian peer-review journals reveals that JWs have substantially more difficulties with mental injury than the general population. The scientific research shows that JWs are screening positive for high rates of clinically significant symptoms consistent with one or more mental disorders:

- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- major depressive disorder
- generalized anxiety disorder
- social anxiety disorder
- panic disorder
- mood disorder
- alcohol and drug abuse

Some JWs (such as firefighters, paramedics, and police officers) are almost 4.5 times more likely than the general population to screen positive for mental injury. Among all JWs, the worst off are correctional workers: they are 5.5 times more likely than the general population to report symptoms of mental injury.

Persuading provincial governments to adopt presumptive legislation for occupational mental injury counts among the victories of Canadian organized labour. Nevertheless, presumptive laws need improvement. The major flaw is that there are no pan-Canadian standards because Workers' Compensation falls under provincial constitutional jurisdiction. The result is a mess of

inconsistencies, a hodgepodge of presumptive coverage in which workers are treated unequally, and in some cases, their rights to occupational health and safety are not protected at all.

There are 4 flaws in the existing policy framework (provincial presumptive legislation):

- Many workers are excluded: presumption typically covers categories of workers exclusively defined as public safety personnel.
- In some provinces, all psychological injuries are covered, while in others, only PTSD is covered, and other mental injuries are neglected.
- Some provinces rule out altogether any chronic mental stress that develops gradually and cumulatively over time.
- Some provinces cover mental injuries triggered only by trauma, while others cover mental injury triggered by both traumatic and nontraumatic stressors.

To correct these flaws, the National Union will campaign for common Canadian standards of presumptive legislation. This legislation must cover occupational mental injury for all workers and all scientifically recognized types of mental injury, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

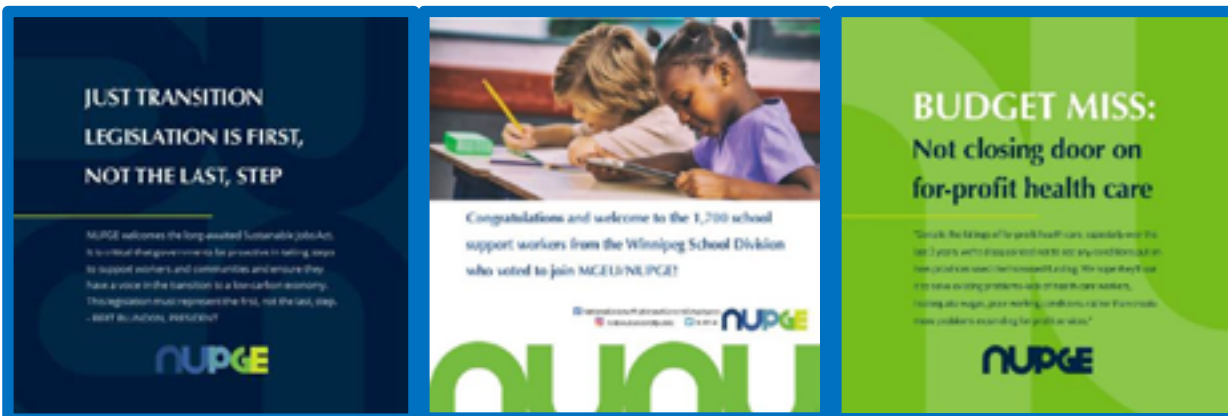
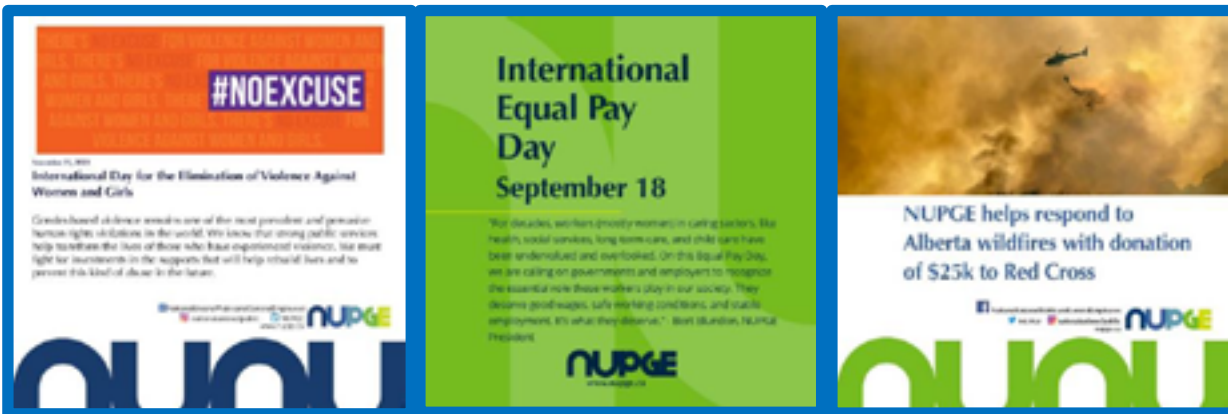
We will fight for public policies that recognize workplace stressors that cause both chronic psychological injuries (developed gradually and cumulatively over time in response to a series of events or to multiple exposures to workplace stressors) and acute mental injury (the result of one single, sudden, discrete, and traumatic workplace or work-related event).

And we will lobby for policies that include both traumatic and nontraumatic workplace stress triggers. Nontraumatic workplace stress is triggered by continuous or multiple exposures to significant workplace stressors that do psychological harm but don't rise to the level of trauma.

Social Media

The National Union's use of social media has definitely increased since the Strategic Communications Plan was put in place in 2022. Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram remain the main social media channels on which the National Union shares its work. Much more of the NUPGE content is now shared on these platforms to expand the reach of our material and message.

As a union, we use our voice to highlight the issues we care about. We have over 100 important days to commemorate. Our online posts allow us to share our perspective on certain events and promote issues that we are fighting for. On March 8, we recognize International Women's Day in order to highlight the gains women have made, but also to raise attention to ways to enrich women's lives. Statements on International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the International Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job allow our members and the public to learn more about NUPGE's values and priorities.



We also continue to amplify the voices of our Components and our allies to bring attention to issues that matter to members, the labour movement, and the public.

Valuing Care

The National Union has worked for decades to highlight the issue of care—both the rights and dignity of those receiving care and the rights of workers that provide care. The Advisory Committee on Women's Issues has highlighted, in particular, the need for child care and elder care through its work on life/work balance and how women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid caregiving.



Care systems are in crisis due to decades of underfunding, neglect, deregulation, and privatization. Too often, care services are fragmented rather than delivered through coherent systems. Workers in the care economy face diverse challenges, but common are low wages, poor

working conditions, precarious employment, and high turnover. Staffing shortages that predated the pandemic have worsened. And many working within in this sector are reporting increased levels of stress and mental health issues due to overwork, burnout, and increased violence.

On November 3, 2023, a Social Workers' Working Group meeting was held as part of the National Union's Caring in Action: Building a More Just Future Forum. During this session, participants reported that high workload is a major issue. Across the country, in the social services sector, staffing levels are at an all-time low. Many positions are left unfilled due to retention and recruitment issues. This increased workload due to a shortage in staff is resulting in many workers working increased overtime, suffering burnout, having little to no work/life balance, and choosing to pursue careers in the private sector. Many social workers are choosing to leave the public service to pursue jobs in the private sector such as counseling, which offers higher wages and greater work/life balance.

Participants also noted that their workload has increased due to the complexity of the issues their clients are now facing, such as addiction and homelessness, etc. All participants reported major issues, such as working alone, increased acts of violence by clients and the public, a toxic work environment, dealing with the overdose crisis among their clients, no mental health support and feeling unheard or appreciated by their employer. Despite the traumas these workers face almost daily, there is little support for their mental well-being, and that these workers are often facing post-traumatic stress disorder is not being addressed.

NUPGE has a representative on the Occupational Health and Safety B701 Technical Committee that focuses on supporting care workers with caring responsibilities outside of their paid work. Lack of workplace support can result in these care workers leaving the workforce, missing work and taking early retirement.

Website

Following the adopted recommendations of the Communications Strategic Plan, our website, nupge.ca, has become a space for the National Union to create short commentaries on major issues facing our members and the public. Our posts provide shorter analysis on issues like privatization, Component bargaining victories, and the crisis in health care.

In 2023, we launched our first campaign, Climate Change at Work, which allowed people to share their stories on our [testimonial wall](#) about how climate change has affected their lives at work and at home. We are also now able to create letter writing campaigns linked directly to our website.

With the help of Action Network, our website has become an action centre for members to [write directly](#) to their government officials. We will continue to use nupge.ca to campaign on more issues in the coming year.

In 2023, we had 37,361 unique visitors view information on the website, with 71,624 page views. This chart outlines the most popular pages on the site.

12 most visited pages

Page title	Page Views	Users
Scholarships [online application form]	17757	11507
Homepage	15610	11667
About NUPGE	3845	2765
Scholarship FAQ	3636	2508
The Latest	1589	1036
Contact Us	1234	872
Climate Change at Work	841	378
NUPGE Statement on the Escalation of Violence in Israel and Palestine	758	486
Tell your MP to support a Just Transition for workers	738	713
Reports and publications	439	302

National Executive Board Meetings

Meeting #319—March 21 to 22, 2022, Vancouver

Meeting #320—April 13, 2022, Videoconference

Meeting #321—June 16, 2022, St. John's

Meetings of Committees and Working Groups

January 12	Component Elected Executive Officers
January 26	UCCO Raid of Newfoundland Corrections Officers
February 8	Special Anti-Racism Committee Videoconference
February 9	Component Elected Executive Officers
February 15	Indigenous Issues
March 1	Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues
March 1	Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Retail Representatives
March 2-3	Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
March 7	Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee
March 9	Advisory Committee on the Environment
March 2-3	Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
March 20	National Union Finance Committee
March 24	Special Committee on Child Care
March 28	UCCO Raid of Newfoundland Corrections Officers
March 28-29	Health Human Resources Working Group
April 5	Privatization: Researchers, Communications Staff, and Campaigners
April 12	Legal Strategies Component Coordinating Committee
April 14	Component Indigenous Representatives
May 3-4	Joint Finance Committee and Component Elected Finance Officers and Staff
May 11	Component Elected Executive Officers
May 11-12	Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat
June 16	Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
August 13-19	23rd Leadership Development School
August 17	Finance Committee
September 19	Finance Committee
September 22-23	Correctional Officers and Youth Facility Worker Representatives
October 4	Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Sales Representatives
October 11	Component Elected Executive Officers
November 23-24	Pensions Working Group
October 13-14	Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
October 20-21	NUPGE Conference on the Environment
October 20-21	Pension Working Session
October 27-28	Component Communication Officers

October 27	Special Committee on Child Care
Oct 31–November 1	Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat
November 7–8	Young Workers' Conference
November 7–8	Component Communications Officers
November 9	Legal Strategies Component Coordinating Committee
November 17	Privatization: Researchers, Communications Staff, and Campaigners
November 28	Finance Committee
December 14	Anti-Racism Committee

External Partners Meetings

January 11	CLC Executive Committee Virtual
January 12	CLC Environment Advisory Committee
January 13	CCPA—Trade and Investment Research Project (TIRP) Briefing: CUSMA Panel Decision on Dairy
January 17–18	CLC Canadian Council
January 20	Canadian Health Coalition Board
January 26	Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), Development Advisory Committee National Action Plan (NAP) on Mental Health and Criminal Justice
January 27	Canadian for Tax Fairness (C4TF) Board
February 1	CHC Pharmacare Strategy
February 7	CLC Special Meeting re Truck Convoy Pandemic Protest
February 8	CLC International Group
February 8	CHC Board Seniors/Long-Term Care Committee
February 10	CLC National Political Action Committee
February 12	Counter Protest to End Ottawa Truck Convoy Occupation
February 15	CLC Child Care Working Group
February 16	Trade Justice Network
February 23	CLC Legal Challenges Coordinating Committee
February 23	CLC Text Rally, Beyond Black History Month
February 24	CLC UNCSW 66 Trade Union Delegation Briefing
March 1–4	SHARE Investor Summit
March 1	Cannabis Retail Representatives
March 7	Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee
March 9	Advisory Committee on the Environment
March 14–25	66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
March 16	Collective Bargaining, Police Unions, Race and Civilian Deaths Seminar
March 22	CLC National Political Action Committee
March 22	Hate Crimes in Canada: Justice System Gaps and Strengths

March 23	Trade and Investment Research Project
March 23	Trade Justice Network
March 24	Green Economy Network
March 24	Carleton Work and Labour Advisory Board
March 30–April 1	Transition to a Just Economy Dialogues
April 2	Canadian for Tax Fairness Board
April 4	CLC Employment Insurance Committee
April 4	CLC Legal Challenges Committee
April 5	CLC Executive Committee
April 6	CLC Pension Advisory Committee Group
April 11	Mental Health Commission of Canada
April 13	CLC Solidarity and Pride Working Group
April 19	CLC Anti-privatization Researchers' Group
April 21	CLC Indigenous Rights Working Group
April 25	Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Strategy Session
April 26	BC Government and NUPGE
April 27	CLC Young Workers' Advisory Committee
April 27	Canada Employment and Social Development's Labour Program, Tripartite Virtual Roundtable re ILO Annual Conference
April 29	PSI LGBT+ Global Working Group
May 4–6	ILGA World Conference
May 5	Council of Canadians Webinar: Policing, Protest and the Resurgence of the Far Right
May 11	CLC Environment Advisory
May 17	CLC International Group
May 17	CLC Disability Rights Working Group
May 25	CLC Women's Advisory Committee
May 26	International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group
May 27–June 11	PSI's 110th International Labour Conference
May 12	CLC Pension Advisory Committee
May 17	CLC International Group
May 25	CLC Women's Advisory Committee
May 26	International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group Spring Assembly
May 29–31	2022 National Apprenticeship Conference
June 9	CLC Workers of Color Working Group
June 13	CLC Executive Committee
June 14	CLC Human Rights Advisory Committee
July 25	Canadian Peace Officers Memorial Association
August 26	Canadian Blood Services Representatives
August 31	Migrant Rights Network (MRN) Labour Solidarity Committee
September 8	Green Economy Network (GEN)
September 12	CLC Employment Insurance Committee

September 13–14	PSI North American Affiliates
September 16	CLC International Group
September 26	Mental Health Commission of Canada
September 26–27	CLC Women’s Advisory Committee
September 26–28	Climate Action Network (CAN-Rac) Days on the Hill
September 28	Child Care Now: National Child Care
September 26	Development Advisory Committee, National Action Plan on Mental Health & Criminal Justice, Mental Health Commission of Canada
September 26–27	CLC Women’s Advisory Committee
September 26–28	Climate Action Network Lobby Days
October 3	CLC Indigenous Rights Working Group
October 4	CLC Solidarity and Pride Working Group
October 5	CLC Human Rights Advisory Committee
October 5	CLC Legal Challenges Coordinating Committee
October 6	CLC Disability Rights Working Group
October 6	Canadian Health Coalition Board
October 12	CLC Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Committee
October 13	CLC Pension Advisory Committee Group
October 13	CLC Environment Advisory Committee
October 25	CLC Canadian Council
October 27	Canadian Health Coalition Paid Plasma Working Group
November 1	Development Advisory Committee, National Action Plan on Mental Health & Criminal Justice, Mental Health Commission of Canada
November 1	CLC Education Advisory Committee
November 1	CLC Care Economy Fall 2022 Policy Incubator
November 6–18	UNFCCC Conference (COP 27), Sharm El-Sheik (Egypt)
November 10	Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) Pharmacare Working Group
November 30	Mental Health Commission of Canada

Government Relations Letters

April 1	Just Transition Consultation 2022—request to participate in a series of roundtables with unions, industry, and experts.
April 21	Letter to Provincial Premiers: John Horgan, Premier of BC; Jason Kenney, Premier of Alberta; Scott Moe, Premier of Saskatchewan, Heather Stefanson, Premier of Manitoba; Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario; François Legault, Premier of Quebec; Blaine Higgs, Premier of NB; Tim Houston, Premier of NS; Dennis King, Premier of PEI; Andrew Furey, Premier of NL; Sandy Silver, Premier of Yukon; Caroline Cochrane, Premier of NWT; P.J. Akeeagok, Premier of Nunavut; Letter in support of collecting race-based COVID-19 data at the federal and provincial levels.

April 13 Letter to Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development; cc: the Prime Minister and Leaders of the other federal parties and Rosa Pavanelli, General Secretary, PSI. Letter calling on the federal government to reject the recently leaked WTO text and come back to the original intention and vision contained in the TRIPS Waiver proposal made by India and South Africa.

April 5 Letter to Taylor Bachrach, Federal NDP MP, Member of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Letter requesting a meeting with him and the representatives of the BCFMWU to discuss concerns about the corporate practice of importing of foreign workers in the marine industry and firing existing workers.

April 4 Omar Alghabra, Minister of Transport; cc: Stephanie Smith, BCGEU President; Eric McNeely, BCFMWU President; and Dan Kimmerly, BCFMWU, Ships' Officers' Component President. Letter requesting a meeting, including representatives of the BCFMWU, to discuss concerns around the issue of the corporate practice of importing of foreign workers in the marine industry and firing existing workers.

February 25 Federal Budget 2022 Consultations—online submission.

February 17 Draft changes to the Lobbyists' Code of Conduct submitted to the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying.

February 1 Letter to Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, asking for bold action to tackle the climate crisis, and as emphasized previously in a letter to his predecessor, Minister Wilkinson, the public sector has an essential role to play.

January 26 Letter from Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Labour, to Rosa Pavanelli, General Secretary, Public Services International (PSI), and the National Union, reporting that Canada has signed off on International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 190. Letter states that the government is currently working closely with provincial and territorial governments with a view towards ratification of Convention 190 and hopes to ratify the Convention as early as possible.

January 19 Letter to François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, regarding the need for more comprehensive data on precarious employment in Canada.

January 13 Letter to Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Labour, asking for protections and supports for workers who are precariously employed.

Publications and Submissions

March 2023	Strengthening Bill C-35, the Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act: NUPGE Submission to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA)
May 2023	Paramedics in Crisis: A report on the working conditions of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Workers
June 2023	Submission to federal consultation on post-secondary education institutions and insolvency
June 2023	Tackling the Climate Crisis—Towards a More Just, Sustainable, and Public Future
June 2023	Tackling the Climate Crisis—Towards a More Just, Sustainable, and Public Future: Climate Action Matters to Working People
August 2023	Collective Bargaining for the Environment
August 2023	NUPGE Submission for the Pre-budget Consultations for the 2024 Federal Budget
August 2023	Briefing Note: Hansman v Neufeld
September 2023	Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act: Briefing Note
September 2023	Tackling the Climate Crisis—Towards a More Just, Sustainable, and Public Future: An Environmental Justice Approach
September 2023	Tackling the Climate Crisis—Towards a More Just, Sustainable, and Public Future: Responding to the Climate Crisis with a Strong Public Sector
September 2023	Tackling the Climate Crisis—Towards a More Just, Sustainable, and Public Future: Reducing the Carbon Footprint of the Public Sector
September 2023	Tackling the Climate Crisis—Towards a More Just, Sustainable, and Public Future: A Just Transition for All Workers and Their Communities
September 2023	Towards a More Just, Sustainable, and Public Future: Building a Better Future
October 2023	Strengthening Bill C-35, An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada: NUPGE Submission to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology
November 2023	Climate Change Legal Challenges: Briefing Note
November 2023	Period Poverty in Canada (Update)
November 2023	The Cost of Being a Woman: The Pink Tax Phenomenon



2024

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) is a family of 13 Components. Taken together, we are one of the largest unions in Canada. Most of our 425,000 members work to deliver public services of every kind to the citizens of their home provinces. We also have a large and growing number of members who work for private businesses.

The office of the National Union of Public and General Employees is on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

We recognize the crimes that have been committed and the harm that has been done and dedicate ourselves as a union to moving forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of reconciliation and striving for justice.

Bert Blundon, President

Jason MacLean, Secretary-Treasurer

Dear Friends,

The *Annual Report 2024* showcases the extensive and impactful work of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) over the past year.

Through our collective work, we have enjoyed several successes on issues the labour movement and civil society have been working toward for decades.

- The *Sustainable Jobs Act* that sets up the framework ensuring workers in resource-based sectors have access to stable, meaningful employment in a just transition was passed in the House of Commons.
- *The Pharmacare Act*, which will pay for diabetes and contraception medication, received Royal Assent on October 10, 2024. This Act will establish the foundation for an expanded range of coverage.



For decades the labour movement has lobbied governments to ensure Canadians could get the medication they need, workers could leverage our power when negotiating collective agreements, and to ensure that workers are at the table as we shift jobs away from oil and gas. Our pressure, combined with the influence of the NDP, forced the Liberal government into providing these fundamental rights and benefits.

While these gains are welcomed, we also witnessed the federal government force workers back to work, overriding the constitutionally entrenched right to strike. Dock workers, rail workers, and postal workers were all legislated back, despite being either locked out or in legal strike positions. This is another reminder that while we fight for increased rights, we must guard our existing rights closely.

We continue to build the NUPGE profile with our members and Components, the broader labour movement, and with decision-makers in the federal government. Our modern, strategic approach has expanded our influence on key national issues, including health care, affordable housing, and the rising cost of living.

When we look for solutions to fix this human resource crisis in health care, we only need to look to our growing membership —140, 000 — of health care professionals for solutions. We wanted to dig deeper into the role our members play in the health care system and the challenges facing them, to hear firsthand what is happening and how they are being impacted.

That's why we developed the first-ever national survey of NUPGE health care members. The data from this survey will serve as a solid foundation that will allow us to get to the root of the problems and recommend solutions.

Our National Executive Board met in Halifax during the last First Ministers' meeting to raise the alarm about the crisis in health care. We joined our allies to send clear messages to each Premier that we are determined to make this an issue at every turn.

Elections have taken place in 3 out of 10 provinces meaning many of our members are facing some new faces across the bargaining table. New faces doesn't mean better. Many Components have been forced to the brink of striking to get a fair deal for members. But, as always, our members have remained strong in their principles and fight for fairness and justice in the workplace.

And while 2024 brought many successes to workers, it also brought sadness. Russia is still invading Ukraine and Israelis and Palestinians are still at war. Donald Trump has been elected as President of the US for the second time promising to wreak more havoc on the American people and around the world.

We will always be tested by those who do not have our best interests at heart, but in the face of the challenges we are facing, we need to be brave, hold onto our humanity, and uphold our values.

Bringing Workers Together

Components and members are so appreciative when we bring people together to strategize, problem solve and organize. Despite the distances, people realize that we are fighting the same battles, against the same kind of obstacles. We learn from each other and realize that we are not alone. We have established new committees to meet the needs of our diverse membership: Special Workers with Disabilities, and the Special Pride committee, were formed in 2024. We continue to organize through occupations and sectors, and issue-based gatherings.

NUPGE works in solidarity with many allies across civil society and throughout the labour movement. These connections help build our presence on the national stage, making an impact on priority issues, and putting forward our progressive agenda for a better world.

As a social union, it's important for our union to not just fight for workers' rights but to work with those fighting for justice and equality, strong public health care, tax fairness, and environmental sustainability.

We continue to prove that when we work together, we can make a difference. This report details our involvement nationally and internationally movements through the Canadian Labour Congress, Public Services International, and the International Transport Worker's Federation.

The National Executive Board

Our National Executive Board is comprised of some of the most experienced and highly regarded labour leaders in Canada. They have guided our Components to important wins that impact our members and the broader labour movement. Together, we work through problem solving and make sound decisions to ensure that NUPGE is a transparent, collaborative, and principled union. We are grateful for their commitment and leadership

NUPGE Staff

We consistently say that NUPGE punches above our weight. This is true in large part because of the hard work, dedication, and commitment of our staff. Under the leadership of Managing Director Len Bush, and Director of Communications, Political Action and Campaigns Jeanne d'Arc Umurungi, our staff members provide considered, high-quality work every day. Despite their different roles and responsibilities, they work together as a cohesive team, collaborating on research, campaigns, political action, and government relations. We are thankful for their expertise, their passion, and the professionalism they bring to our union.

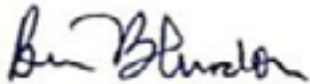
NUPGE Members

Continuing with that gratitude, I want to thank our 425,000 members across the country. Being a trade unionist is not always easy. We face struggles in the workplace, at the bargaining table, and in the political arena. Thank you for the sacrifices you make to help make life better for your coworkers, for members at the other end of the country, and for your neighbours. It's your activism that makes us the powerful force provincially, nationally, and internationally that we are today.

Our work is rooted in the shared values of fairness, justice, and equality—principles that drive everything we do. These values fuel our fight for good jobs, safe workplaces, and secure retirements for all workers. We stand strong against those who seek to weaken our union and exploit vulnerable workers and communities—whether it's austerity-driven governments, profit-focused employers, or those who threaten fundamental human rights here in Canada and across the globe.

We believe in the power of solidarity. Together with our allies, we will break down barriers of discrimination and intolerance, ensuring every workplace is one of dignity and respect. We are committed to building a future where meaningful work is accessible to all, where sustainability guides our progress, and where justice is not just an ideal, but a reality. We do this not just for ourselves, but for the generations to come—because a better world is possible, and together, we will make it happen.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bert Blundon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bert Blundon



NUPGE Working with Components

Over the last year, NUPGE has focused on the issues members prioritized at our last convention. This is a report documenting the work we undertook representing our members on the national level and providing support to our growing number of Components.

Strategic advice, research, government relations, and campaign creation are just some of the ways the National Union has supported Components over the last year. Through difficult bargaining, to capacity building within the membership, to creating opportunities to support members and their families, our goal is to make our union stronger.

An important way we support our Components is when we coordinate workers from across the country to share insights, develop common strategies, and build solidarity. These gatherings take the form of working groups, committees (and special committees), and conferences.

Advisory Committee on the Environment

The Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE) met twice in 2024. At ACE, members share the work their Components are doing related to the environment and climate change. This includes member education and campaigns, working with committees, and Components' operational changes. Additionally, at the March 19 meeting, there was a discussion on advocacy and initiatives related to water. An ongoing topic of discussion is collective bargaining on environmental issues.

ACE also follows, and informs NUPGE's work on, federal issues and policies. The main focus this year was Bill C-50, the *Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act*, the federal legislation that sets up the framework for a Just Transition. Bill C-50 was a focus of the Climate Change at Work campaign this year, as discussed in a later section in this report.

ACE discussed the Issues Forum being planned for the fall and gave input for discussion on topics and speakers. The committee heard a presentation from Sean Sweeney of Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED), a network of unions that NUPGE is a part of, on TUED and its work.

ACE met jointly with ACYWI on October 3–4 as part of NUPGE's Issues Forum in Ottawa. In addition to sharing updates on Components' work, participants identified challenges with engaging members on environmental issues and climate change. Although these issues are tied to core issues like wages and working conditions, with workers on the front lines of climate change impacts being underpaid and facing more difficult conditions, they are often seen as lower priority or not connected. The committees also discussed the impacts of climate change on young people—at work and in their communities—and the importance of their input on solutions. Finally, the committees shared ideas for possible resolution topics for NUPGE's 2025 Convention.

Advisory Committee on Women's Issues

The Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI) met twice in 2024. The first meeting was held February 21–22, 2024. At the meeting the committee received the finalized version of the The National Union's publication entitled [*The Cost of Being a Woman-The Pink Tax Phenomenon*](#). The publication explores the effects and costs of gender-based pricing and looks at actions to end the practice. Following a lengthy discussion, there was a consensus that the National Union should take a lead on the issue which is important to women and those identifying as women but does not have the attention of the media or any other major unions.

The committee was provided with an updated version of the National Union's publication entitled [*Period Poverty in Canada*](#). The publication explores the effects, costs and actions currently being undertaken regarding period poverty.

The ACWI met again October 3-4, 2024, in conjunction with the Issues Forum #3 which brought together the ACWI, the Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues and the Advisory Committee on the Environment to discuss the interconnected environmental and inequality crises. The committee discussed the environmental impact of menstrual products, and the fact that single-use menstrual products and packaging are the most found waste on beaches and in the oceans.

A lengthy discussion was held regarding the issue of women's health. Participants stressed that women's pain and symptoms are often underestimated or dismissed entirely, which can have serious health consequences. Even though women have specific health issues associated with their anatomy such as pregnancy, periods and menopause and they present with different symptoms than males in areas such as heart disease, only 7% of medical research funding is specific to women's health.

A link was provided to the Canadian Labour Congress report on [Harassment and Violence in Canadian Workplaces: It's \[Not\] Part of the Job](#). The report compiles the results of a survey conducted in 2020 by the CLC and researchers from the University of Western Ontario and the University of Toronto. Nearly 5,000 workers took part in the survey. 71.4% of survey respondents experienced at least one form of harassment and violence or sexual harassment in the 2 years prior to completing the survey.

Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues

The Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues (ACYWI) held a videoconference on April 9, 2024. There were 8 participants from 6 Components.

Connecting with young workers remains an ongoing challenge. Several Components are conducting member mapping and member surveys, which give Components demographic data about their members. However, because young workers' issues haven't always been a high priority or a well-advertised one for unions, many young workers don't realize that they have a voice in their unions.

Participants also discussed NUPGE's website and provided feedback on what they'd like to see on a page dedicated to the ACYWI, as well as a page for all NUPGE's committees. When discussing NUPGE's website in general, participants said they frequently get questions from young workers about what NUPGE is and how NUPGE relates to their Component.

Paris Jones, Associate Director of Education and Leadership Training at the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), spoke to participants about the mentoring programs produced by AFSCME, and gave the participants several resources to use in their Components.

ACYWI met jointly with ACE on October 3 to 4, 2024, in Ottawa, as part of NUPGE's Issues Forum #3. The joint meeting was held to satisfy a resolution from the 2022 convention.

Something common across Components is challenges with engaging and supporting young workers. Young workers are facing difficult circumstances, such as lack of access to affordable housing, prevalence of precarious work, and mental health challenges. They also face barriers to engaging in the union, whether it is lack of time, lack of awareness, or feeling that they do not have a voice.

Participants were asked to discuss the impacts of climate change on young people both at work and in their personal lives. Participants raised the point that extreme weather and disasters resulting from climate change disrupt people getting to and from work, as well as creating dangers on the job and can even contribute to the death of workers.

Rising costs of food, transportation, and housing as a result of climate change were brought up. Companies are passing the extra costs of shipping and resource extraction onto the consumers, which is pushing up the cost of living.

A large portion of the discussion focused on city planning and the urban/rural divide. Given the distinct impacts of climate change on young workers, it was noted that we should be listening to ideas for solutions that young people have to offer.

Prior to the meeting, participants were asked to think about possible topics for resolutions on young workers issues and the environment. Most of the suggestions focused on education, reducing barriers to participation in union activities, and a general push for more diversity at all levels of the union.

Anti-Racism Committee (ARC)

The Anti-Racism Committee (ARC) held a videoconference on March 21, 2024. There were 10 participants from 6 Components.

Participants had a robust discussion on NUPGE's position and on the crisis in Gaza. Several participants were appreciative of the leadership NUPGE has shown by putting out a statement early and by continuing to call for peace. When thinking about next steps, participants suggested identifying what principles NUPGE supports (i.e., that genocide is wrong, and that everyone has a right to safety) and putting them in a statement.

Participants also suggested focusing on the core of unionism: that unions exist to improve the rights for people around the world. The issue at hand is a corrupt government in Israel that has crossed the line from self-defence to massacre. It doesn't matter what race, ethnicity, or faith a government is made up of: corruption and genocide need to be addressed.

Much of the meeting was spent brainstorming items to include in the Terms of Reference for the committee. Participants also spent some time discussing resolutions from the last convention and the possibility of adding committee pages to the NUPGE website.

Nicholas Marcus Thompson, Executive Director of the Black Class Action Secretariat, gave participants an overview of the Black Class Action and then opened the floor to questions.



Figure 1 NUPGE Anti-racism Committee members

ARC met again in St. John's, Newfoundland, on September 12-13. There were 13 participants from 9 Components.

Participants began the meeting by providing feedback on the draft Terms of Reference. Overall, participants were happy with the draft TOR and provided feedback to help make the TOR more robust.

Participants shared updates on what their Components have been working on since the last ARC videoconference. Topics of discussion included equity caucuses, the process for adding equity seats to executive boards, seniority vs lived experience, and members' identities being scrutinized when they apply for equity positions.

Sobia Shaheen Shaikh, Co-Chair of the Anti-Racism Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARC-NL), and Maria Dussan spoke to participants about the work ARC-NL does and about how unions can take on anti-racism work. Including anti-racism language in collective agreements would also go a long way to help all BIPOC members. Having an anti-

racism analysis of the union done by a third party is a good starting point for unions that want to make changes.

Prior to the meeting participants were asked to think about possible topics for resolutions on anti-racism and anti-hate. Education was a central theme to many of the suggestions that came from participants. Participants were eager to see education programs related to equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as anti-racism training at the leadership level of all NUPGE Components. Participants also discussed ways to help with the fear Muslim and Jewish members are feeling.

Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat (CHPS)

The Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat (CHPS) is a unique multi-union body that is hosted by NUPGE which meets twice a year. In 2024, meetings were held in June and December. CHPS represents these highly trained health care professionals who engage in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation services. Allied Health Professionals play an important role in the delivery of health care and many of these professions are under-recognized.

During the CHPS meeting, Components deliver a Component Report which addresses some of the key issues they are facing. A major part of the event is to have Components engage in a discussion about how to strategize and resolve issues brought forward in the reports and of concern to all Components.

There are also discussions of critical health care issues, especially as they pertain to Allied Health Professionals, but also as they impact the whole public health care system. Some of the issues discussed this year include, labour shortages, the impacts of agency health care recruiters, the Liberal-NDP Confidence and Supply Agreement, Pharmacare, paid plasma, privatization and Long-Term Care.

2024 saw the state of health care in Canada rapidly deteriorate as the impacts of the pandemic continue to challenge the public health care system. Governments and employers did little to address long-standing issues such as health care labour shortages. This has created a major problem in the retention of health care worker and made the crisis even worse. Workers are suffering mental harm from having to work short and from the ongoing high expectations and demands of their work, without having the support needed.

CHPS is committed to continuing to press for recognition of the roles and importance of allied health professionals across Canada. Some of the key areas where work is ongoing is

Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee

The Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee (CBAC) provides a forum to discuss bargaining issues and strategies across the country. The committee met twice this year, in person on February 27–28 and virtually on October 30. Components have been facing many common issues affecting bargaining: high cost of living, wage restraint legislation, essential services legislation, and the impacts of the pandemic. Positive developments include the introduction of single-step certification legislation in BC and Manitoba, and anti-scab legislation in Manitoba as well as federally. There are also emerging issues, such as artificial intelligence. CBAC discussed these issues, how they are playing out in their provinces and sectors, and strategies to respond.

In February, the committee heard a presentation from David Macdonald, Senior Economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, on his report, *How the Public Sector is Fighting Income Inequality*. CBAC also gave input to NUPGE on the Union-Led Advisory Table's work, particularly on ways to address staffing shortages in the health care system.

CBAC helps to support information sharing across Components, such as sharing policies or collective agreement language on a particular topic. The committee has helped to identify what information is of use and how best to share it. In addition to sharing updates on Component bargaining, the October meeting focused on several topics that were raised in NUPGE Convention resolutions: tackling precarious work, environment and climate change, intimate partner violence/domestic violence, and protections for transgender workers. Participants shared and discussed Component collective bargaining language and strategies on these topics.

Component Communications Officers Working Group

Component Communication Officers on February 12 and 13, 2024 and on October 5 and 6, 2024 in Ottawa. In February, 9 participants, from 7 Components, participated in this meeting.

David MacDonald from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives presented the findings of their Union Advantage research which showed there are clear benefits from being a part of a unionized workplace. Brent Farrington from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) talked to participants about the federal election strategy.

In October, Laurie Antonin, from the CLC presented on her experience during the US Democratic Convention working with influencers to advance our message. She outlined how building connections with online creators will help us reach larger audiences.

At both meetings, participants reviewed the political landscape throughout the country and reviewed new and ongoing Component campaigns.

Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Representatives

There were 2 meetings of Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Retail Representatives in 2024. Privatization continues to be a focus of discussions, but health and safety issues are also a concern. After liquor workers in 3 provinces were forced to take strike action over the last 3 years, there has also been discussion of strategies and tactics used when approaching negotiations.

In the spring, the problem of violent thefts was discussed. These are a health and safety issue. In some provinces people are now having to present ID before entering liquor stores and this has helped reduce the number of thefts and make workplaces safer. In Ontario, a safe entrances program was abandoned, and problems are continuing.

In October, OPSEU/SEFPO/NUPGE shared information about how they prepared for negotiations with the LCBO and the eventual strike. To assist a Component preparing to fight privatization, there has also been discussion of what arguments are most effective when defending public distribution and retailing of liquor and cannabis. Both discussions reflected the long-held belief in the importance of supporting other Components in their fights against liquor store privatization and for fair treatment of workers.

Correctional Officers and Youth Facility Workers

The annual Working Session for NUPGE Correctional Officers and Youth Facility Workers Representatives was held in Ottawa September 27 to 28, 2024, with 36 participants from 7 Components, and 6 guests from the Alberta Union of Public Employees (AUPE).

A central focus of this year's meeting was violence in prisons: causes, consequences, and ways forward, which accounted for a significant portion of the meeting's discussion.

An invited guest at the meeting, and the keynote speaker, was Dr. Ivan Zinger, Correctional Investigator, Office of the Correctional Investigator. Dr. Zinger spoke about escalating violence in federal penitentiaries. Dr Zinger invited participants to compare his findings with the situation in provincial institutions.

Another guest at the meeting was Dr. Rosemary Ricciardelli from Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador who presented on two separate topics: one was on the causes and consequences of violence in prisons, and ways forward. Another topic was moral injury and public perceptions: correctional officers' interpretations and experiences.

Questions and answers followed the presentations from the guest speakers. And there was a group discussion on violence in which participants responded to the guest speakers and talked about root causes of violence and measures available to assist workers who are victims of occupational violence.

There was a comprehensive and thorough discussion on the following topics:

- Collective bargaining and grievance update
- Wages
- Raiding
- Staffing-shortage crisis
- Recruitment, retention, and turnover in relation to low morale, burnout, and low wages

On Sunday, September 29, as in previous years, many of the NUPGE working group members participated in the Annual Canadian Police and Peace Officers' Memorial on Parliament Hill.

Ferry and Marine Workers

Throughout 2024, the National Union continued to work in coordination with the British Columbia Ferry and Marine Workers' Union (BCFMWU) to review corporate practices that harm workers in the marine sector.

In March 2024, BCFMWU Ships' Officers Component President Dan Kimmerly, was appointed to the prestigious position of Vice Chair of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) Ferry Task Force. Working alongside Task Force Chair, Ronny Øksnes from the Norwegian Seafarers' Union, and fellow Vice Chair Generick Morales from the Associated Philippine Seafarers' Union, this talented team worked tirelessly to protect and promote the welfare and rights of ferry workers worldwide. This appointment is of great importance for the whole NUPGE family of unions, because it elevates our union's status on the international stage and enables us to advocate for the interests of Canadian mariners within the ITF. With President Kimmerly's representation, NUPGE is influencing policies and initiatives that directly impact ferry workers' working conditions, safety, and overall well-being in Canada and abroad.

In November 2024, National Union President Blundon sent a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau opposing government interference in the labour dispute between Maritime Employers' Association and CUPE 375 Longshoremen's Union, as well as at the ports in B.C. and in Quebec City. Blundon objected to the government's decision to interfere in the collective bargaining process with binding arbitration, thereby violating the constitutionally protected rights of Canada's port workers by forcing them off their legal picket lines. The government intrusion directly benefitted The Maritime Employers Association, who have consistently refused to bargain in good faith with port workers. This marked the fourth time this year that the Trudeau government used the Section 107 provisions to send bargaining into binding arbitration, trampling on the normal bargaining process and infringing on the right to strike.

Information Technology Staff

In 2024 there were two meetings held of National Union component staff members who are responsible for information technology.

A videoconference was held on March 6, 2024. There were 4 participants from 3 components. The purpose of the meeting was to explore topics that could be discussed at an in-person meeting. The topics that were identified formed the basis of an agenda for the September in-person meeting.

An in-person meeting was held October 22-23, 2024, in Ottawa. There were 17 participants from 8 components. The purpose of the 2-day meeting was to share information and discuss best practices on the following topics:

- Solving organizational challenges: a discussion was held about using tools such as UnionWare to facilitate managing membership, whether IT departments are getting membership-unique identifiers from the employer (Employer ID) to make matching dues easier, and whether departments are getting opposition because of privacy laws. A discussion was held about technology used for conventions, for example, delegate registration and credentials, and electronic voting systems.
- Participants discussed cyber-security policies, and ways to reduce high cost of cyber insurance costs, and possible advantages of a group discount on cyber insurance.
- A discussion was held about the use of cloud services, including topics such as: service providers—options other than UnionWare that allow the keeping of data while using cloud services; malware protection software used; business continuity plans and disaster recovery in place for cloud services.
- Participants discussed future technologies such as generative AI and machine learning.

Indigenous Issues Committee (IIC)

The Indigenous Issues Committee (IIC) met in Winnipeg on April 18 to 19, 2024. There were 9 participants from 5 Components.

Due to the majority of participants being staff, the creation of the Terms of Reference was postponed to a later meeting. However, participants still had a general discussion on what the Terms of Reference or Guiding Principles could look like.

Components who participated in the meeting are in different stages of engaging with Indigenous issues and Indigenous members. Most of the Components in attendance have some form of Indigenous committee, working group, or caucus. Some Components are making progress on relationships with Indigenous Elders and creating Elder Protocol documents. Protocol documents are extremely important, as many unions don't realize they're being rude to Elders by doing things like leaving them in the hall prior to a meeting or giving them only 2 minutes on the agenda for a blessing.

At the last meeting, participants had created a list of commemorative days that are marked in their provinces (list included in report). It was agreed that all Components should be marking those days with a statement or graphic post to provide education to members on Indigenous history, culture, and issues.

Participants also discussed the idea of NUPGE hosting Indigenous-themed educational webinars.

The IIC met again via videoconference on October 21, 2024. There were 10 participants from 7 Components.

Much of the meeting was spent working on the Guiding Principles (the Terms of Reference for the Indigenous Issues Committee). Prior to the meeting participants were sent a rough draft of the Guiding Principles and asked to come prepared with feedback. The draft Guiding Principles were copied from the Anti-Racism Committee's Terms of Reference and reorganized under the Indigenous conceptual framework of the Six Rs.

Participants had a brief discussion on Resolution #75 from the 2022 convention but, given the nuanced topics covered by the resolution and time constraints, it was decided that participants would revisit this topic in the next meeting.

Participants provided suggestions for resolutions for the 2025 convention on topics such as: the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people, Jordan's Principle, mental health supports for Inuit communities, clean drinking water, and more.

Issues Forum #3

This forum brought together members of the Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE), Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI), and Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues (ACYWI). The overarching theme was exploring how to tackle the interconnected environmental and inequality crises.

In President Blundon's opening remarks, he underscored the intersections between environmental crises, particularly climate change, and our struggles for equality and

justice. This message was reinforced in a presentation by 4 women human rights defenders

from Ecuador, who were in Canada to draw attention to environmental and human rights violations in Ecuador, particularly the impacts of Canadian mining companies.



Stephanie Peltier, an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper, provided a welcome, prayer, and teaching to open the first full day of the forum. She gave a teaching about our interconnectedness to the land and water. Catherine Abreu of the International Climate Politics Hub gave an overview of intersectionality and climate justice. Indigenous rights and water activist, Autumn Peltier, spoke with participants about her story and lessons from her activism. Christopher Wilson, Alicia Richins, and Denise Hampden provided the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists' workshop on tackling environmental racism. The forum provided an opportunity for members to learn and share with one another, build solidarity, and discuss actions we can collectively take.

During the forum, participants also engaged in committee meetings, with ACE and ACYWI meeting jointly to fulfil a 2022 convention resolution.

Leadership Development School

In 2024, the National Union held its 25th Leadership Development School between August 17 and 23 at the Horseshoe Resort near Barrie, Ontario. This was the largest Leadership Development School that NUPGE has ever held. 30 people participated, including



Figure 2 NUPGE Leadership Development School Participants

representatives from 8 Components and 2 international guests.

Elaine Bernard, the former executive director of the Harvard University Labor and Worklife Program, delivered the core program. Other sessions looked at some of the challenges the labour movement in Canada is already facing and some of the challenges for which we need to prepare. These sessions included ones on fighting racism, the housing crisis and artificial intelligence.

Legal Strategies Working Group

This working group brings together Components' legal counsel, staff, and leadership to discuss legal issues, including court challenges. Participants share updates from their provinces and unions. They discuss, and share analysis on, issues and cases of common interest from across the country. NUPGE's legal counsel attends these meetings and offers updates and analysis. Between meetings, NUPGE shares updates or materials on notable cases or legal issues. For example, NUPGE has prepared briefing notes on legal challenges related to climate change.

In 2024, the working group met twice by videoconference. Essential services legislation—different models across the country and the impacts on bargaining—continues to be topic of discussion. Unions in Ontario successfully challenged the province's wage restraint legislation, and a challenge in Nova Scotia is ongoing. There were also updates and discussions on workplace harassment and the use of non-disclosure agreements. There has been a rise in anti-2SLGBTQIA+ legislation and policies from right-wing governments, often under the guise of so-called "parental rights," which are being challenged. There have been positive developments in Manitoba, where the NDP government introduced anti-scab legislation and single-step certification, and in BC, where single-step certification has led to a rise in organizing and the government introduced legislation on picketing rights.

National Political Action Committee

The National Political Action Committee (NPAC) met by videoconference on September 24, 2024. There were 9 participants from 6 Components.

The focus of discussion was on what needs to be addressed in a training program to help activists fight the far right. This is part of the work to implement a 2022 Convention resolution on fighting the far right. There was also discussion of recent developments in federal politics.

Post-Secondary Education Working Group

On June 13, NUPGE convened a virtual meeting to bring together members in the post-secondary education (PSE) sector. The meeting focused on the role of PSE in responding to disruptions and transitions impacting the labour market, such as staffing shortages, an

aging workforce, technological change, and the climate crisis. Participants shared their perspectives and recommendations, giving examples of what is happening in their provinces and what their Components are calling for.

For example, the PSE system is responding to worker shortages by adding more training programs or expanding capacity to train in-demand workers. The PSE system can also respond to the climate crisis and support the transition to a low-carbon economy by providing programs in areas such as environmental science and renewable energy, as well as reducing its own emissions and improving energy efficiency.

Unions are also calling on governments to address the chronic underfunding of PSE, which has worsened precarious employment and fueled the reliance on international students.

Lack of funding also exacerbates recruitment, and retention challenges and hinders the ability of the sector to respond to the needs of society. The group also discussed emerging trends of artificial intelligence and micro-credentials. The discussion and Suggestions informed NUPGE's contributions to the federal Union-Led Advisory Table.

National Union Scholarships



3 Scholarship winner from HSABC/NUPGE

Each year we are impressed with the quality and thoughtfulness of the submissions for NUPGE Scholarships. We appreciate everyone who took the time to make a submission. It is always a difficult decision to choose the winning essays because the competition is so strong.

The National Union awards 9 scholarships in the amount of \$2,500 each year. All applicants must provide an essay and must be admitted to a Canadian public, post-secondary educational institution.

Applicants for the 2 Young Worker Scholarships may apply as members. All the other scholarships are available only to the children/grandchildren and foster children/grandchildren or legal wards of one our members and/or the retirees of our Components or of a Component's affiliate.

Except for applicants to the Young Worker Scholarships, applicants must not have earned any post-secondary credits and must be starting their first year of a post-secondary program on a full-time basis. But applicants for the Young Worker Scholarships may apply if they are currently enrolled or have previously received post-secondary credits. They must be under the age of 30 at the time of the scholarship cut-off date.

The following were awarded in November 2024:

Brian Fudge Memorial Scholarship—Andi-Lee Reardon, PEIUPSE/NUPGE
Scholarship for Black Students—Christale Rasamison, MGEU/NUPGE
Scholarship for Indigenous Students—Siobhan Smith, HSABC/NUPGE
Scholarship for 2SLGBTQIA+ Students—Mikayla Totten, CEU/BCGEU/NUPGE
Scholarship for Students of Colour—Naman Gautam, HSAA/NUPGE
Terry Fox Memorial Scholarship—Lauren Watson, NSGEU/NUPGE
Tommy Douglas Scholarship—Reyhan Habib, HSAA/NUPGE
Young Worker Scholarships—Ryan Iwanicki, OPSEU/SEFPO/NUPGE and Xavier Rosarda, MGEU/NUPGE

Special Pride Committee

The Special Pride Committee (SPC) was formed in 2024 and will be presented at Convention 2025 to become a regular standing committee. The SPC held a videoconference on February 12, 2024. There were 8 participants from 7 Components.

The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss committee objectives and to brainstorm the Terms of Reference (TOR). Sharing information across Components, particularly information around collective bargaining was identified as a key priority. Several Components have begun looking at ways to include more inclusive language in their collective agreements or in memoranda of understanding. Education was also mentioned as an area the committee could work on.

Participants suggested that the focus of the committee be more outwards than inwards, so that the committee can help 2SLGBTQIA+ communities where people aren't union members. Most of the Components in attendance have a committee focused on equity and human rights. Some of the Components also have committees focused on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues.

Participants discussed the pushback they've received from some members who say unions shouldn't be involved in equity issues. The consensus was that these members aren't working to maintain the core of what unionism is. It's also likely that the hate organizers who lead anti-2SLGBTQIA+ rallies will target unions soon too, as unions are collective spaces for people to gather and organize. We need to make connections for members on how supporting equity issues is union business, but at the same time, we need to approach the work with the intention of calling people in as opposed to calling them out.

When discussing committee membership, some participants spoke in favour of having allies on the committee, because they support the communities and are important in sharing and normalizing 2SLGBTQIA+ issues. Other participants were in favour of having allies at events, but spoke about the importance of lived experience, and thus preferred that the committee be open only to 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Special Workers with Disabilities Committee

The Special Workers with Disabilities Committee (SWWDC) held a videoconference on February 12, 2024. There were 5 participants from 5 Components.

The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss committee objectives and to brainstorm the Terms of Reference (TOR). Sharing information across Components, particularly information around collective bargaining, was a large focus of the discussion. It's common for members not to know unions can assist them with issues of discrimination and accommodations unless it's explicitly spelled out in collective agreements.

Education was brought up as another key focus of the committee. It was mentioned that Labour Relations Officers often aren't given enough education on how accommodations work, particularly the legalities of securing an accommodation. Educating members on the importance of sick time and benefits was also discussed. Many members are in the privileged position of never needing to use their sick time and benefits or using them rarely. But for members with disabilities, having sick time and so-called benefits can be a matter of life and death. And if the value of the benefits doesn't keep up with inflation, people with disabilities are at even more of a disadvantage.

Components have the final say in who they send to meetings, but participants agreed that the TOR should state a strong preference that committee members be people that have a disability. Unions cannot do effective work in the fields of disability justice, accessibility, and

advocacy for people with disabilities without the lived experience of people with disabilities.

Participants also spent some time discussing resolutions from the 2022 convention. A resolution will be brought forward at the 2025 convention to turn the special committee into a standing committee called the Workers with Disabilities Committee (WWDC).

Wildland Firefighters

In 2024, there were three meetings held of NUPGE wildland firefighters, the aim of which was to develop strategies and provide testimony to government regarding proposed changes to the National Occupation Classification (NOC). Under the NOC, forest firefighters are not defined as firefighters, but they are classified as silviculture and forestry workers.

This exclusion of forest firefighters from the official definition directly harms the economic well-being of forest firefighters by creating a built-in inequality. To change this erroneous classification, the National Union undertook a comprehensive campaign in 2024 to amend the NOC, which entailed many months of lobbying (discussed elsewhere in this report).

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One of the encouraging outcomes of this campaign was that the National Union was invited to take part in a workshop with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) as well as other government ministries. Held on December 5, 2024, the aim of the workshop was to provide information explaining why Canada's wildland firefighters should be properly categorized as firefighters in the NOC. The workshop brought together 13 wildland firefighters from five provincial components and from the Alberta Union of Public Employees, along with NUPGE President Bert Blundon and NUPGE staff.



4 NUPGE Forest/wildland firefighters

The event drew dozens of high-ranking officials from ESDC, Statistics Canada, and Revenue Canada. During the workshop, wildland firefighters shared powerful testimony and insight about their training, education, experiences, duties and responsibilities, skills, risks, and needs. Their accounts resonated strongly with government officials, who praised their contributions. The officials heard compelling information and evidence—if any was still needed—for urgently amending the NOC to reflect Canadian wildland firefighters' role and work more accurately. To prepare for this workshop, on November 26, 2024, the firefighters held a videoconference strategy meeting. And following the workshop, on December 6, they held an in-person day-long post-mortem discussion in which they reviewed the workshop outcomes and developed a strategy for 2025.



NUPGE in the Broader Labour Movement

Canadian Labour Congress

Through their membership in a National Union, Component members are also affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The CLC is the largest labour central in Canada and represents 3.3 million workers.

NUPGE participates in the various committees and working groups of the CLC. We also play a significant role in their triennial constitutional convention.

The leadership at the CLC has moved quickly to reconstitute its committees and embark on some important actions since taking office in 2021. CLC committees are disbanded after each convention and then start anew shortly afterward.

CLC Disability Rights Working Group

The CLC held two meetings of the Disability Rights Working Group in 2024, in May and December. Arlene Phillips (OPSEU/SEFPO/NUPGE), who is the CLC's VP for Workers with Disabilities, and Lily Chang, CLC Secretary-Treasurer, co-chair the working group.

In the May meeting, Phillips led a discussion on the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB). The CDB, which is intended to lift people with disabilities out of poverty, has a maximum annual amount of \$2,400 and is reduced based on personal and family income. There are also issues with the eligibility being determined through the Disability Tax Credit, a notoriously difficult tax credit to obtain due to its confusing definition of disability and the costs associated with having a health professional fill out the application. It remains to be seen whether the provinces will claw-back their disability benefits because of the CDB.

Phillips also raised concerns about Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) being accessed due to failures of our health care and social welfare systems, citing a [recent example](#) from Montreal. In 2022, the [most cited](#) source of suffering by individuals requesting

MAiD were the loss of ability to engage in meaningful activities followed by the loss of daily life.

The rest of the discussion focused on disability and the [Employment Equity Task Force report](#). The CLC submitted 4 recommendations during the report consultation period: that the *Employment Equity Act (EEA)* approach to disability reflects the definition of disability within the *Accessible Canada Act*; that the act be intersectional and acknowledge the ways various systems combine and worsen discrimination and exclusion; for there to be a focus on disaggregated data collection to better understand the distinct and nuanced challenges and barriers to employment faced by various communities; and the need for strength and compliance mechanisms that involve unions to bring complaints under the act.

In the December meeting, working group members received a presentation from Wayne Harris on the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Group (ONIWG). Harris highlighted several of the issues with the WSIB, namely that the WSIB rejects 90% of initial claims and forces workers to return to the workplace before they are fully healed, resulting in further injury, reliance and addiction to pain medication, and deterioration of worker mental health and social lives. He cited Doug Ford's recent announcement that the Government of Ontario is returning \$2 billion in surplus funds to Ontario businesses through the WSIB thanks to, "the agency's new approach to strong financial management." Harris stated that these surpluses are created by the WSIB hiring doctors who are willing to violate their Hippocratic oath and say the worker is fit to return to work even if the worker's own doctor states they need more time to heal. The surpluses are also created by systemic denials in initial claims. Injured workers

experience physical and mental trauma. Many believe there is no point in reapplying if a claim is denied or don't have the energy or ability to reapply.

During the discussion period, working group members shared their personal experiences of injuries at work as well as cases their unions assisted with. There is still a large stigma around reporting injuries at work as the blame is automatically put on the worker for doing something wrong instead of the employer for having an unsafe workplace or not providing adequate training. Chang stated that some of CUPE's collective agreements have dedicated stewards with specialized training to help navigate workers compensation claims.

CLC Education Advisory Committee

There were three meetings of the CLC Education Advisory Committee in 2024. Topics included presentations on courses offered by affiliates and a pilot of a CLC course, Challenging Ant-Black Racism. The results of the CLC's Labour Education Review were shared with committee members.

Among the tasks identified by the review is the need to update CLC training videos.

CLC Employment Insurance Advisory Committee

The CLC Employment Insurance Advisory Committee met twice in 2024. Its first meeting, was to prepare with the EI Forum, including a discussion of what issues to raise. At the October meeting the Board of Appeals for Employment Insurance that are in the process of being set up and EI Benefits Delivery Modernization were discussed.

CLC Environment Advisory Committee

The committee met twice in 2024. A focus for the CLC and many affiliates has been Bill C-50, the *Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act*. There were also discussions on recent provincial elections, the US election, and the next federal election with regards to potential implications for the environment and for a worker-centred energy transition. The committee has also been sharing updates and strategies related to collective bargaining on environmental issues. The committee heard presentations from guest speakers, including from Blue Green Canada and the Green Economy Network on the work of those coalitions and on the environmental benefits of remote work. Regarding the international level, the committee discussed the outcomes of COP28 and priorities going into COP29.

CLC Health and Safety Advisory Committee

Two meetings of the CLC Health and Safety Advisory Committee were held in 2024, on April 11 and October 22.

On April 11, the meeting began with a discussion about COVID-19 and next steps. The conversation then turned to a consideration of the Bill C-190 Legislative Review: determining gaps in federal, provincial/territorial Occupational Health and Safety vis-à-vis ILO 190, and determining best practices. Participants also discussed ILO 2019 workplace violence and harassment, and the problem with tracking and reporting statistics on violence.

There was a discussion regarding third-party violence, including the unique challenges faced by frontline workers, and an update was provided about a forum organized in the fall.

A representative from Health Canada provided an update about the workplace hazardous products program that regulates Canadian suppliers, and the legislation that governs these products.

An important conversation took place regarding the Westray Campaign Update, and concerns that the law is not being used to its full extent. Representatives from the USW talked about the campaign called “Stop the Killing enforce the law.”

There was a discussion about psychological health, resiliency, and coping. Many participants called into question the very idea of ‘resiliency’ and rejected behaviour-based safety and wellness programs as they are often used to blame workers and absolve the responsibility of management to ensure a healthy and safe workplace. Participants insisted that the focus must be on identifying and eliminating workplace hazards, particularly psychological hazards and stressors, rather than a wellness approach.

At the October 22 meeting, an update was provided about the CSA Technical Committee participation, on what is going well and what can be improved. Several members brought forward the idea of a labour participation coordinator, to be paid for by CSA.

There was an in-depth presentation on the development of an International Labour Organization (ILO) convention addressing biological hazards. The proposed Convention was initiated by a committee in June 2024, and key decisions are expected at the ILO meeting in June 2025, with US presidential elections likely influencing the outcomes.

Deniqua Edwards, the Human Rights Department Harassment and Violence Representative, provided an overview of reproductive health at work. She highlighted how workplace barriers can worsen impairments associated with various reproductive life stages and disorders. She emphasized how the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) could offer support to unions through resources for collective bargaining, model language, and discussions on leave options. Additionally, she advocated for increased member and public awareness and education on workplace health.

There was a presentation on how the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee was working on a potential global plastics treaty. A CLC representative also provided updates regarding engagements with Health Canada, including the consumer products exclusion, Safety Data Sheets and Silica.

CLC Indigenous Rights Working Group

The CLC held two meetings of the Indigenous Rights Working Group in 2024 in May and December. Debra Merrier (CUPE), who is the CLC's VP for Indigenous workers, and Lily Chang, CLC Secretary-Treasurer, co-chair for the working group.

In the May meeting, affiliates gave reports on what they've been doing on Indigenous issues. Their work included:

- having a dedicated page on the union website
- running national Indigenous Women Leadership course
- offering educationals for their boards on Truth and Reconciliation and on Turtle Island
- creating guides on truth and reconciliation for bargaining and on respecting Indigenous members' and their culture

Bargaining was listed as a priority for several affiliates and it was suggested that the CLC create a database for collective bargaining wins that relate to Indigenous people. Members had a discussion on the Report of the Employment Equity Act Review Task Force and were then put into breakout groups for more targeted discussion.

In the December meeting, much of the focus was on preparing for the next federal election. Working group members viewed the CLC's Workers Together campaign and engaged in a discussion to help refine campaign initiatives, messaging, and focus. Working group members suggested incorporating an Indigenous view in policymaking to promote sustainability and fairness, as well as increasing support for mental health and addiction programs for Indigenous youth.

The CLC has launched the [Indigenous Rights and Justice Resource Centre](#). Progress on the Action Plan from the last CLC convention is advancing, involving both legislative and organizational work within the CLC.

CLC International Group

NUPGE works with allies through the CLC International Group, an informal discussion and coordination group that brings together affiliate staff working on international issues. Through this working group, CLC affiliates share information, discuss issues they are working on, and coordinate where appropriate. For example, unions have coordinated on work related to Colombia, Bangladesh, and Gaza. T

The group holds 2 in-person meetings per year and virtual meetings in between. At these meetings, the CLC also provides updates from the international bodies it participates in, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). There are often presentations or workshops on topics of interest. For example, this year there were presentations on the upcoming Canada-US-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) review and on civil society organizing ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

CLC Legal Challenges Coordinating Committee

This committee works to build cooperation and coordination among labour allies to take legal challenges forward for labour rights. Affiliates also share updates on important cases and decisions that impact workers and unions, similar to NUPGE's Legal Strategies Working Group. The committee is co-chaired by Leigh Sprague of the New Brunswick Union (NBU/NUPGE).

CLC National Political Action Committee

The CLC Lobby on the Hill in November including participants from NUPGE Components. Topics for the 2024 Lobby on the Hill were investing to protect workers, investing in strengthening health care and investing to make life more affordable.

There were two meetings of the CLC National Political Action Committee in 2024. Discussion topics included the affordability crisis, the federal political situation, and changes to the federal *Elections Act* that could make it difficult for unions to communicate with their members during elections.

CLC Pension Advisory Committee

CLC Pension Advisory Committee meetings included discussion of federal government efforts to encourage more investment in Canada through pension funds. Of particular concern is the possibility that the federal government will use attracting pension fund investment in Canada to justify the privatization of public services and infrastructure.

There was also discussion of new developments involving the Alberta government's proposal to pull out of the Canada Pension Plan. Of particular concern is whether a

Conservative federal government can be trusted to defend the CPP, given the links between the current federal Conservative leadership and the United Conservative Party in Alberta.

CLC Solidarity and Pride Working Group

The CLC held two meetings of the Solidarity and Pride Working Group in 2024 in April and December. Gina McKay (CUPE), who is the CLC's VP for 2SLGBTQI+ workers, and Larry Rousseau, CLC Executive Vice-President, co-chair the working group.

In the April meeting, Rousseau gave an overview of Alberta's egregious anti-transgender policies, Quebec approving X gender markers on driver's licences and health cards, and the proposed Bill C-63 (*Online Harms Act*). Rousseau also talked about community engagement and mentioned The Enchanté Network's Black 2SLGBTQIA+ Futures

Summit and Momentum's letter writing campaign against Alberta's anti-transgender policies.



McKay, shared her experience with taking the [White Paper on the Status of Trans and Gender Diverse People](#), which provides recommendations at the federal level, and adapting it for use at the municipal level.

Bennett Jensen, Director of Legal at Egale Canada, gave a presentation on anti-transgender policies across Canada. Jensen stated that the Canadian Security

Intelligence Service's (CSIS) warning that serious violence against the 2SLGBTQIA+ people will be an ongoing threat, should not be taken lightly.

In addition to affiliate reports, the members also discussed the CLC's theme for Pride 2024, No One Left Behind: Equality, Freedom and Justice for All.

In the December meeting participants were given a presentation on the CLC's Workers Together campaign and then discussed campaign messaging and improvements. A representative from OSSTF stated that the union is shifting from traditional ads to more direct/impolite ads. Results show that their ads that [actively name](#) and identify the problem are overwhelmingly effective. People are angry about the high cost of living and they like seeing their union angry too.

There was a discussion about how unions need to speak to their members more directly about politics outside of elections.

Eric Freeman from Egale Canada gave a presentation on issues facing [intersex](#) people in Canada and in the workplace. The key issues are:

- Canada's permissive policies and legislation concerning non-consensual intersex genital mutilation
- The lack of protective legislation, supportive infrastructure, research, and resources for intersex people in Canada
- Canada's silence and lack of advocacy for the right to self-determination for intersex individuals on an international scale.

CLC Training and Technology Advisory Committee

In 2024, the CLC Training and Technology Advisory Committee looked at work being done to create skills transferability matrixes. The committee looks at the skills of workers in sectors where there are likely to be job losses and compare them to the skills of workers that will be needed in jobs that are being created, due to the transition to a low emission economy. The committee also continued its discussion of artificial intelligence and what protections are needed for workers.

CLC Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting

Two meetings of the CLC Transportation Advisory Committee were held in 2024. On May 6, the meeting centred on the following topics: Budget 2024 announcements on the transportation sector and Budget Implementation Bill; the right to disconnect in the Canada Labour Code; an update was provided on Bill C-58 (anti-scab legislation); and an update was given on the Union-Led Advisory Table. Information was provided regarding transportation supply chains and inflation: what the record shows; a comprehensive discussion was held regarding automation in the transportation sector and its impact

on workers and productivity. An update was given on current bargaining in the transportation sector (Air Canada airline division, Port of Montréal); information was provided about the Air Transportation Accessibility Summit; and there was a discussion about recent raiding activities by non-affiliates (e.g. airport pre-board screeners).

At the November 21 meeting, the following topics were discussed: an update was provided on Canada Post Negotiations; invited Speaker Don Ashley, National Legislative Director, Teamsters Canada Rail Conference provided an update on collective bargaining and federal government intervention in the transportation sector. And there was a discussion about federal initiatives on airlines and airports.

CLC Workers of Colour Working Group

The CLC held two meetings of the Workers of Colour Working Group in 2024 in April and December. Vanessa Sharma (MoveUP), who is the CLC's VP for workers of colour, and Larry Rousseau, CLC Executive Vice-President, co-chair the working group.

In the April meeting, Rousseau gave an overview of Bill C-226 (environmental racism), Bill C-63 (online harms), the modernizing the Employment Equity Act, and the 2024 federal budget.

The CLC continues to run anti-racism education, including an updated presentation linking the so-called freedom convoy, the rise of the far-right, and the so-called parents' rights movement. A newly piloted version of CLC's Challenging Anti-Black Racism workshop, a two-hour primer course for allies, is also ready for affiliates.

Participants discussed specific questions relating the role of unions in advancing employment equity.

Gauri Sreenivasan, Co-Executive Director of the Canadian Council for Refugees, gave a presentation on the issues facing refugees in Canada. During the Q&A section of the presentation, a question was raised about the extent of CCR's advocacy focus on expanding refugee claimant status to include climate refugees. It was explained that while there is sympathy for expanding the definition, it is not a primary focus of their current advocacy efforts.

In the December meeting, Rousseau gave an update on the CLC's Lobby Day and legislative priorities. Working group members were also asked to provide feedback on the CLC's Workers Together campaign.

On Emancipation Day, August 1, the CLC, PSAC, CAPE, and Coalition of Black Trade Unionists held a rally demanding accountability for anti-Black racism within the Privy Council Office.

Rousseau also provided a brief overview of the role and work of the Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat. It was established as part of Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy and aims to support communities and organizations across Canada in combating systemic racism and discrimination. Initially housed within Canadian Heritage, the secretariat is now part of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

CLC Young Workers' Advisory Committee

The CLC held two meetings of the Young Workers Advisory Committee in 2024, in March and September. Taylor McIntosh (OPSEU/SEFPO/NUPGE), who is the CLC's VP for young workers, and Siohban Vipond, CLC Executive Vice-President, co-chair the working group.

In the March meeting, committee members gave updates on what their unions are working on. Some initiatives unions are trying are building capacity, starting a committee and holding social events like book clubs, bowling nights, and other low barrier to participation activities.

In the September meeting, Vipond offered a brief update on the state of the committee's objectives. While highlighting how workers are pushing back on multiple fronts, Vipond noted that young workers are worried about their future but continue fighting for a better today. Key fights for young workers include the struggle for decent wages, protecting human rights, holding corporations accountable, making the wealthy pay their fair share, and fighting for strong climate change solutions.

PIPSC's main concern is the return-to-work mandate for public service workers. There is a united front from public service unions on their opposition to this mandate considering the poor infrastructure that workers are returning to and the burden of expectation placed on public service employees. Young workers are the ones most affected by this return-to-work mandate. The return-to-work process has been very haphazard with many people affected by the lack of direction. Most of the bargaining within the federal public service has concluded so, PIPSC is trying to keep these priorities alive until the next bargaining period.

Liam Vanderbraak (OPSEU/SEFPO/NUPGE) gave a presentation on how unions can best engage young workers. Vanderbraak noted that unions: can boost engagement among young workers by capitalizing on social movements, need to create concrete experiences for young workers by allowing them to participate in events and share their knowledge, and must remove systemic barriers that prevent young workers from participating in their union.

Following the presentation, committee members took part in a planning session on young worker issues and the strategic planning around the issues highlighted in the

presentation. During the discussion, the committee was able to map out important objectives for the period between now and the next election.

Public Services International – Inter-American Regional Conference

NUPGE is affiliated with the Global Union Federation, Public Services International (PSI). From November 13-15, 2024, the PSI convened the Inter-American Regional Conference (IAMECRON) in Bogota, Colombia. There were 6 NUPGE delegates in attendance from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Alberta.



A highlight of the week was a dinner with the lawyers of NUPGE allies, the José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective (Cajar). The lawyers from the collective told us about the stellar work they are performing on labour rights in the country.

Starting on Sunday, November 10, some preliminary meetings were held with representatives from 10 public utility sectors to discuss the issues facing their sectors in the region and established guidelines for an action plan to address them.

On November 11, a meeting was held with PSI's Health Federation comprising health care unions from across the Americas and Caribbean. A major topic of discussion was how labour migration was affecting national health care systems.

On November 12, a meeting of the Sub-Regional Advisory Committee (SUBRAC) of North American affiliates was held. As it immediately followed the US election, a considerable amount of time was dedicated to the changed political terrain in the United States and what this could potentially mean for Canada. In addition, many issues were discussed including artificial intelligence and the impact on public sector workers, challenges faced by them and climate change.

Then from November 13-15, 2024, union leaders from across North and South America and the Caribbean came together at PSI's IAMRECON to renew our global struggle for quality public services and share strategies on fighting the rise of the right.

The high-level political event included participation from government ministers, allies and over 400 union leaders who emphasized the importance—now more than ever—of building international solidarity to grow workers' power. The conference also represented a moment of renewal: PSI Regional Secretary Jocelio Drummond retired at the end of the year with Euan Gibb, PSI Regional Assistant and Global Multinationals Organiser, set to take on the role.



NUPGE Working with Our Allies

Canadian Health Coalition

The CHC held a lobby in February 2024 where public health care activists met with over 70 MPs and Senators. NUPGE had the largest contingent of participants, with 38 members attending. The reports from members suggested that this lobby continues to be worth supporting.

The CHC has gone through a significant leadership change in 2024, with its longtime chair, Pauline Worsfold, stepping down. NUPGE Secretary-Treasurer, Jason MacLean was acclaimed as the new CHC Chair in June.

The role of CHC Chair is critical in bringing together the coalition and Jason MacLean's election to the chair marks the first time in the history of the CHC that the coalition has not been chaired by a Nurse. The current crisis in public health care is unprecedented. There is a dangerous rise in for-profit health care in Canada and the public health care system is experiencing severe shortages of health care workers. While some progress was made through the introduction of pharmacare and dental care. These

programs are still //very fragile and have not been fully implemented.



Canadian Peace Officers' Memorial Association

NUPGE continues to be a member of the executive committee of the Canadian Peace Officers' Memorial Association (CPOMA). The CPOMA organizes an Annual Peace Officers' Memorial Service in Ottawa on Parliament Hill that honours peace officers murdered in the line of duty. Many NUPGE peace officers from across Canada, particularly workers in corrections (institutional and community corrections), attend the annual service.

Canadians for Tax Fairness

NUPGE is continuing to strongly support the work of [Canadians for Tax Fairness \(C4TF\)](#).

C4TF have been showing how the tax system can be made fairer and pushing governments to act. They have shown that there is an alternative to cutting services and programs people rely on—increasing revenue by making wealthy individuals and large corporations pay their fair share. At a time when right wing politicians are trying to claim there is no alternative to austerity, that work is more important than ever.

But as C4TF has shown, generating additional revenue to adequately fund public services isn't the only way that tax fairness can make life more affordable. Profiteering by large corporations in sectors like energy, financial services, housing and groceries have made life less affordable for Canadians. Several reports that C4TF produced this year have looked at how tax fairness can help deal with that problem.

The C4TF [report on tax breaks for Real Estate Investment Trusts \(REITs\)](#) showed they encourage financialization of housing, the main reason that housing prices and rents are skyrocketing. Another report looked at how an [excess profits tax](#) could both discourage profiteering and generate much needed revenue for programs that Canadians need.

Other recent reports showed that the claim that tax fairness will harm investment in Canada's economy is a myth. One [report showed that when profits were going through the roof, investment in Canada stalled](#). Another showed that there is no link between increasing the tax on capital gains and productivity—in fact in the years after the last cut in capital gains, tax labour productivity dropped in half. Those who profit from an unfair tax system have tried to claim that making the tax system fairer might harm the economy. The Canadians for Tax Fairness report shows that claim is false.

Child Care Now

NUPGE is a member of Child Care Now, the national child care advocacy organization. Child Care Now advocates for a publicly funded, inclusive, quality, non-profit child care system. Child Care Now has been involved in the efforts to build a Canada-wide child care system, monitoring the implementation of the bilateral agreements, and pressuring governments to address gaps. Child Care Now also works with provincial advocacy coalitions and has supported capacity-building.



Child Care Now has been focusing on addressing the workforce challenges in the sector and pushing for improvements to wages, benefits, pensions, and working conditions. This includes developing recommendations for government. In November, Child Care Now also led the coordination of the 10 Days of Action for \$10 a Day Child Care, building on national days of action in recent years. With the days of action, the child care movement called on governments to continue to build and strengthen the Canada-wide child care system, not move backwards.

Climate Action Network

NUPGE is a member of Climate Action Network Canada (CAN-Rac), a coalition of organizations—for environment, labour, faith groups, and civil society groups. NUPGE participates in regular CAN-Rac meetings, during which members discuss national and regional policy updates and share research, campaigns, and other initiatives. Climate justice is a priority for CAN-Rac, evident in its efforts on advancing a Just Transition and on international solidarity, and in its internal work, such as updating its Charter. In September, CAN-Rac organized its Climate Convergence, the first large in-person network gathering since before the pandemic. The convergence brought together CAN-Rac members and allies for learning and strategizing.

CAN-Rac also does education, analysis, and advocacy related to federal policy. CAN-Rac is engaged in almost every aspect of climate policy. A major focus this year has been the oil and gas emissions cap. CAN-Rac engages in climate issues and policy in the international sphere. This year, that included a webinar series on international climate finance. This fall and winter, COP29 was a major focus. CAN-Rac provides briefings, analysis, and logistics support to member organizations, as well as coordinating those participating on the ground. NUPGE participated in these efforts.

COP29

NUPGE participated in COP29, the UN climate summit. COP is where countries come together to tackle the climate crisis. Unions like NUPGE go to COP, alongside allies in the environmental movement and in civil society organizations, to represent workers and to ensure that workers' rights and perspectives are part of the discussion. COP is an important opportunity to try to shape the outcomes of negotiations and build solidarity with allies around the world as we coordinate and exchange with them.



This year, the focus of the negotiations was climate finance, which refers to the obligation of wealthy, high-emitting countries to provide support to developing countries to tackle the climate crisis and adapt to it. Parties were set to negotiate a new climate finance target, which included both the amount and nature of the funding. The final agreement fell far short of what is needed and what was expected. In addition to calling for a fair climate finance deal, civil society groups, including unions, emphasized the importance of human rights throughout the various negotiations. NUPGE representatives worked with allies through the trade union delegation, convened by the ITUC, and the Canadian civil society delegation, convened by CAN-Rac. We coordinated to follow and try to influence the negotiations, raising the importance of labour rights and public services. We also participated in government relations meeting convened by the CLC.

Green Economy Network

The Green Economy Network (GEN) is a coalition of labour, environmental and social justice groups working to build a greener, more equitable economy in Canada. NUPGE is a member and participates in the management committee. Through GEN, member organizations meet to discuss common priorities, share their work, and coordinate where appropriate. This year, GEN updated its Ten Policies for a Green Economy. The network also held discussions about the potential federal election.

GEN welcomed a new national convenor in the fall, who has been focused on engaging with member organizations and raising the profile of GEN. In December, GEN held an all-members meeting, which included a presentation on the impacts of the US election on climate action, as well as updates from members on their initiatives.

International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group

The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG) is a national coalition of civil society organizations that works to defend civil liberties and human rights, especially in the context of anti-terrorism laws and national security activities. The coalition brings together NGOs, unions, faith groups, human rights groups, and others. ICLMG produces educational materials, writes submissions to government, meets with MPs and government officials, engages in actions and campaigns, and facilitates coordination amongst coalition members.

ICLMG has been active on work related to artificial intelligence, facial recognition technology, surveillance, and privacy. In April, NUPGE joined other ICLMG members and allies in sending a joint letter to the federal government expressing concerns about the proposed *Artificial Intelligence and Data Act (AIDA)* and the importance of meaningful consultation. ICLMG continues to advocate for independent review processes for national security and intelligence agencies. As part of its work on the treatment of Canadians detained abroad, ICLMG continues its advocacy for Hassan Diab, as NUPGE has, and campaigns on Canadians detained in Northeastern Syria. ICLMG works to oppose racial, religious, and other forms of profiling by national security laws and activities, especially toward Muslim and Arab communities and people of colour. A major topic this year was the crisis in Gaza and the repression of support for Palestinian human rights. ICLMG has also been following and giving input to the new *Online Harms Act*. The coalition released a report, *Defending Civil Liberties in an Age of Counter-terrorism and National Security*, to mark its 20th anniversary.

Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), Advisory Committee— National Action Plan on Mental Health and Criminal Justice

The MHCC is developing and implementing a National Action Plan (NAP) on mental health and criminal justice “to recognize and address the mental health needs of people who come into contact with the criminal justice system.” This NAP is supposed to include those who work in the system, and those who face criminal justice. Furthermore, it includes identifying the needs and considerations of priority populations (e.g., Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, and women) and working to mitigate the impacts of colonialism, racism, and other forms of oppression. To assist in the development and implementation of an NAP, the MHCC invited NUPGE to join with 21 experts on a Development Advisory Committee to give strategic advice, opinion, feedback, and to provide expertise to MHCC and “ultimately co-create” the action plan. In 2024, the MHCC continued to hold meetings requesting feedback from the advisory committee on the draft outline of the national action plan, which is expected to be released in 2025.

Responding to the Crisis Genocide in Gaza

NUPGE continued to participate in Ceasefire Now, a coalition of labour, faith, Arab, Jewish, and civil society organizations that grew out of the October 21, 2023, [statement](#). In March 2024, the coalition developed an online campaign where individuals could write to their MP urging them to show support for a ceasefire during a vote in the House of Commons. The NDP introduced a motion that, while imperfect, was in line with many of the coalition's demands, including an immediate ceasefire in Israel-Palestine, restoration of humanitarian aid, the release of hostages, an end to Israel's blockade of Gaza, and long-term solutions to ensure lasting peace and justice.



NUPGE also continued to issue statements and pressure government. This included a joint letter from unions calling on the Prime Minister to restore funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) and statements in support of the student mobilization on campuses across Canada and around the world.

In April, NUPGE released a joint statement with other national unions, which called on the Canadian government to immediately suspend the trade of arms and military equipment with Israel. Canada's trade relationship with Israel includes military equipment, which means that Canada is complicit in the violence and human rights violations Israel is perpetrating in Gaza. Building on the urgent appeals for a ceasefire in the region and for humanitarian relief, there have been growing calls globally from trade unions, civil society, and humanitarian organizations for an arms embargo on Israel to help prevent genocide in Gaza.

NUPGE also joined the Arms Embargo Now coalition, which launched in May with a [statement](#) aimed at the Canadian government. The campaign developed a webpage,

educational resources, shareable graphics, and online tools where people could write to their MP to support the call for an arms embargo. The campaign successfully put pressure on MPs, including Liberals, to publicly endorse the call for an arms embargo. There were national days of action in June and in August. As a result of public pressure, the Canadian government announced that it would suspend about 30 existing export permits for the sale of military goods to Israel, in addition to approving no new export permits. This was a welcome first step, but advocates remain concerned about the numerous existing permits that remain active and the fact that Canada sends military goods to the US that are then exported to Israel. But these developments show that public pressure works.

In November, President Blundon joined other union leaders in a meeting with Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967.

Trade Justice Network, and Trade and Investment Research Project

The National Union continues to work in solidarity with labour and civil society allies in ongoing meetings to share research and to promote collective action on the impact of global trade and investor rights agreements on our economic and democratic institutions. To this end, NUPGE is engaged with 2 coalitions: 1. the Trade and Investment Research Project (TIRP), and 2. the Trade Justice Network (TJN). The primary focus of TIRP is to share information and research, and the aim of the TJN is political advocacy and action.

The National Union's involvement in these important coalitions allows us to join forces with allies to defend the public interest against expanding corporate rights, power, and influence at the foundation of neoliberal market globalization. The National Union has long held the view that these agreements remove public safeguards, threaten public safety, erode democracy, and undermine environmental laws and regulations. They also erode quality public services through specific mechanisms designed to lock in liberalization and privatization. In so doing, these agreements accelerate and entrench widening inequality of income and wealth.

In 2024, both coalitions raised awareness and provided critical intelligence about several global investment regimes, including ones to which the Government of Canada is a party:

- Canada-US-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA)
- Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, formerly TPP
- Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- Possible Ecuador-Canada Free Trade Agreement

With our TIRP and TJN allies, in 2024, the National Union continued to monitor the situation in ongoing negotiations for new trade and investment regimes.

Trade Unions for Energy Democracy

NUPGE participates in Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED). TUED aims to advance the democratic direction and control of energy systems to address the climate crisis, energy poverty, the degradation of both land and people, and to respond to the attacks on workers' rights and protections. TUED produces research and hosts forums to discuss key issues and highlight experiences around the world.

In 2024, TUED continued to build the work of TUED South, which brings together unions in the Global South, including through meetings and regional coordination. The network coordinated the release of joint demands from Global South unions during COP29 calling for a public approach to climate finance. TUED also convened a meeting of women leaders who are involved in TUED.

INVESTING TO
SUPPORT WORKERS

INVESTING TO
STRENGTHEN HEALTH CARE

INVESTING TO
MAKE LIFE MORE AFFORDABLE

Major Issues (NUPGE and the Future)

Anti-privatization

In November, NUPGE had an Anti-Privatization Conference in Fredericton, New Brunswick. The conference was intended to share information about what services are being threatened with privatization and what tactics and strategies are effective in fighting privatization.

There were also speakers on two threats people need to be aware of when fighting privatization. Rebecca Graff-McRae from the Parkland Institute in Edmonton spoke about health care privatization in Alberta. Chris Hurl from Concordia University spoke about the role played by large consulting firms in privatization and how they use information and data they have already acquired to leverage a larger role for themselves in the provision of public services.

Emerging threats to public services were also discussed. These included the role that artificial intelligence could play in the privatization of public services and the growing role of pharmacies in the privatization of health care.

NUPGE has also done work in specific sectors to respond to the threat posed by privatization. These sectors include health care and liquor and cannabis distribution.

The National Union continues to provide materials drawing attention to the problems with privatization. This includes website stories on the [problems with the use of for-profit staffing agencies](#) in health care, the fact that public operating rooms were going unused at the same time the [Ford government was outsourcing surgical procedures](#), and the fact an IT firm at the centre of an outsourcing scandal in the UK received a [contract for an outsourced IT project](#) from the Canadian government.

Canada - Ecuador Free Trade Agreement

In 2024 Canada and Ecuador accelerated negotiations for a Canada–Ecuador Free Trade (FTA) Agreement. While the Canadian government describes the FTA as inclusive and based on respect for human rights, Canadian unions profoundly reject this false characterization and for several key reasons oppose the Canada–Ecuador Free Trade Agreement. In a multi-union letter sent in October to Prime Minister Trudeau, the CLC President along with presidents of 5 labour unions representing more than three million public- and private-sector workers across the country (NUPGE, Canadian Association of Professional

Employees, United Steelworkers, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Public Service Alliance of Canada) expressed deep concern about the negotiations: because they were happening without transparency, without the free, prior, and informed consent by Indigenous Peoples; and because they were happening amid a deepening crisis of profound environmental damage, and disturbing human rights violations.

Of particular concern was the serious risk to ecologically sensitive areas due to resource extraction, including high-altitude wetlands and the Amazon region, which is at a tipping point. They were equally disturbed by the adoption of hardline and militarized security policies and executive decrees, and abuses by state security forces with increasing persecution, intimidation, stigmatization, harassment, false accusations, criminalization, imprisonment, and attacks against those who defend their rights, particularly when they express opposition to the impacts of resource extraction projects. They also objected in the strongest possible terms to the attempt to include an investor–state dispute settlement process (ISDS) in the agreement, gives foreign investors the right to sue host states for regulating in the public interest, at the request of mining industry, despite Ecuador's constitutional ban on ISDS.

The labour leaders called on Trudeau to immediately withdraw all diplomatic and other support for Canadian resource extraction companies that have violated human rights, collective rights, and the rights of nature, and which operate without the consent of affected peoples. They also demanded that Canada fulfil its obligations to respect human

rights standards, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), to which both Canada and Ecuador are signatories, ILO conventions, and

all international standards that protect the rights of rural communities, women and girls, and the right to a healthy environment. They called on the government to enact binding mechanisms through legislation to hold Canadian companies accountable for human rights abuses and environmental damage, and to provide access to remedy.

Climate Change

NUPGE continued to work to support Components in their efforts on climate change. In this, the Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE) plays a leading role. We also develop resources for Components and members, such as our factsheet series, guide on collective bargaining on environmental issues, and backgrounder on COP. We have aimed to better incorporate a climate lens in our work on other issues and sectors. Examples include our work with wildland/forest firefighters, post-secondary education workers, legal strategies group, and the ACE-ACYWI joint meeting. Tackling the interconnected inequality and environmental crisis was the theme of the Issues Forum in October.



We also work with allies through the CLC and coalitions like CAN-Rac and GEN, where we can come together on shared priorities and have a united voice on climate action. These coalitions have worked on a variety of climate issues, including Just Transition, public transit, clean electricity, and Canada's emissions reduction targets and plans. NUPGE also works with allies internationally, such as through TUED and at COP29, which is an important part of influencing governments as well as building solidarity and learning from one another.

NUPGE continues to pressure the federal government to take meaningful action to mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects, with an emphasis on the role of strong public services and climate justice. Through the Union-Led Advisory Table, tackling the climate crisis through a strong public sector and Just Transition was one of the main themes in NUPGE's recommendations. A focus of the CLC lobby, which NUPGE members participated in, was supporting a Just Transition for workers and communities in the shift to a low-carbon economy.

We continued our Climate Change at Work campaign, which launched in 2023 with a webpage, list of resources and storytelling action where workers could share how they are being impacted by climate change and their ideas for actions we can take. This engaged members on how climate change is a workplace issue and helped profile workers' direct experiences and ideas. In 2024, the campaign focused on the *Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act*. Through digital actions, members wrote to their government representatives to encourage them to pass strong legislation, with an emphasis on ensuring workers have a voice in developing the strategies, policies, and programs we need to help workers and communities thrive in the transition to a low-carbon economy. NUPGE also wrote to the government and submitted recommendations as the bill was being reviewed. The bill received Royal Assent in June.

Crisis in Provincial Criminal Justice Systems

Canada's provincial criminal justice systems are in crisis for workers, for those who are incarcerated, and for those on probation and parole. Workers in community corrections face heavy workloads, have low or uncompetitive wages, and they are regularly exposed to traumatic experiences, which all lead to recruitment and retention problems.

Furthermore, there are too many institutions that are dilapidated, old, and crumbling, with unsanitary and inhumane living conditions. They are dangerously overcrowded, and they have poor ventilation and low-quality air filtration, which make them susceptible to outbreaks of dangerous viruses and hazardous infectious communicable diseases. Correctional facilities have become institutions of last resort for people with addictions and mental health issues, with limited access to adequate treatment programs or rehabilitation services.

What all this means for front-line corrections workers is exposure to extremely dangerous work environments with serious health and safety risks. There are daily incidents of

violence directly related to overcrowding. And workers (officers and community corrections) receive no special training for dealing with offenders and clients with mental health or addictions issues. And there are not enough correctional nurses to cope.

There is a critical shortage of workers in community corrections and institutions, and ongoing problems recruiting and retaining for all categories of work.


It should therefore come as no surprise that correctional workers suffer from mental injury. For example, correctional officers are almost 5.5 times more likely than the general population, and the highest among all public safety personnel, to screen positive for clinically significant symptoms consistent with one or more mental disorders.

In 2024, the National Union continued to work with Components to highlight and expose the conditions of all justice workers.


Fairness for Forest/Wildland Firefighters


In 2024 the National Union launched a major campaign to ensure that wildland firefighters (WFF) are treated as equal to other firefighters regarding protections and benefits, specifically pensionable earnings and pension accrual. The inequality of WFF is rooted in the fact that they are not officially recognized as forest firefighters, and so they are excluded from the Public Safety Occupation provisions of the federal *Income Tax Act*. Because this problem falls under the constitutional authority of the Parliament of Canada, it is one the federal government can solve, and without legislation.

The *Income Tax Act* sets rules for how much a worker can accrue towards their pension plan (pension accrual rate), and how early a worker is allowed to retire (the retirement age). The law sets the retirement age (the earliest you can draw on your pension plan) at age 55, and the pension accrual rate (the maximum you can accrue towards that pension) is 2% per year. The Income Tax Regulations stipulate that under a defined benefit RPP, the maximum annual pension accrual rate applicable to any particular range of earnings cannot exceed 2%. In recognition of the inherent dangers of certain occupations, an exemption is made in the Act for 5 categories of work deemed Public Safety Occupations (PSO). In the tax regulations, a PSO is defined as “the occupation of a firefighter, police officer, corrections officer, air traffic controller, commercial airline pilot, or paramedic.” An individual working under one of those exempted categories can have a 2.33% accrual rate and can retire at age 50.

 **National Union of Public and General Employees**
 Published by Deb Duffy
 - September 13, 2024 -

Just one among many stories published this year about the increased need to forest firefighters working all year long. We need governments to realize that to recruit wo... [See more](#)



NUPGE.CA 

Forest/Wildland firefighters need your support! - NUPGE
 Right now, Forest/Wildland firefighters are excluded from receiving the same recognition, prot...

The tax rules govern occupations, and the definitions of those occupations are published in an official Government of Canada document called the National Occupational Classification. Forest firefighters are specifically excluded from the list of public safety occupations. The classification defines the "main duties" that firefighters perform. And the classification lists "Employment requirements" of firefighters. As mentioned above, the classification specifically excludes the category of forest firefighter, defining them instead as silviculture and forestry workers.

Because of the way they are defined in the NOC, wildland firefighters cannot accrue pension at a higher rate or retire at an earlier age.

Therefore, one of the most important ways this exclusion can be corrected is by amending the definition of *firefighter* in the National Occupation Classification (NOC) to include forest firefighters.

The campaign to fix this error involved a comprehensive government relations, lobbying, and media strategy conducted throughout 2024, the aim of which was to raise awareness with as many people as possible who are responsible for amending the NOC.

We met dozens of MPs from every province and territory, with MPs from regions affected by wildfires and with members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and national Security (SECU) and their staff. President Blundon met Minister Randy Boissoneault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages), and we shared this story with members of the press and the broader public. Our campaign was featured in national media including CBC's *The National* and *Your World Tonight*, as well as *The Toronto Star* and *CityNews*. We discovered that there is widespread public support for correcting the exclusion of WFF from the *firefighter* category of the NOC, and thus from the public safety occupations grouping.

In April 2024, NUPGE received the unanimous motion of support from SECU requesting that the government of Canada stop excluding forest/wildland firefighters from the firefighter category in the National Occupational Classification. We also received the support and endorsement from fellow firefighters in the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF).

As part of our efforts, we met Senior Policy Advisors and Deputy Directors of Policy with staff members and senior public servants at Employment and Social Development Canada, including the manager responsible for the National Occupational Classification (NOC) and senior representatives (unit head, Section Chief, and Assistant Director of Standards) of Statistics Canada, Centre for Statistical and Data Standards. We met with members from ESDC, from Finance, and the Canada Revenue Agency Policy Director, Senior Policy Advisor, Special Advisor on Social Policy, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance; and staff from the Office of the Minister of National Revenue.

By the end of 2024, two significant developments offered hope for progress in recognizing and supporting wildland firefighters.

1. A workshop with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and other High-ranking Government Officials was held on December 5, 2024, to discuss proposed amendments to the National Occupation Classification (NOC). The workshop brought together 14 wildland firefighters from six provinces, along with NUPGE President Bert Blundon and NUPGE staff. This meeting drew dozens of high-ranking officials from ESDC, Statistics Canada, and Revenue Canada.

During the workshop, wildland firefighters shared powerful testimony and insight about their experiences, skills, risks, and needs. Their accounts resonated strongly with government officials, who praised their contributions. The officials heard compelling information and evidence for urgently amending the NOC to reflect Canadian wildland firefighters' role and work more accurately.

2. Expanded Pension Eligibility for Wildland Firefighters

Two weeks later, on December 18, 2024, the [Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat announced an expansion of early retirement eligibility](#) under the public service pension plan. The Federal Economic Update detailed changes allowing public servants in six critical frontline safety and security roles, including wildland firefighters, to retire early without pension reductions.

In her statement, the Honourable Anita Anand, President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Transport, confirmed that these changes would specifically include “firefighters confronting wildfires,” covering those employed by federal and territorial governments. Under the proposed amendments to the *Public Service Superannuation Act*, eligible federal and territorial wildland firefighters will be able to retire after 25 years of service without penalty.

Global Trade and Investment Deals Continue to Threaten Public Services

Contemporary free trade agreements are supposed to facilitate trade and foreign investment by removing trade barriers, like tariffs. But removing tariffs is only one aspect of these agreements. They do a lot more than that: they’re primarily investor rights agreements endowing extraordinary rights, protections, immunities, and powers to foreign investors and capital. For this reason, we should call them trade and investment agreements (TIAs).

TIAs undermine our ability to legislate in the public interest. They threaten public safety, erode quality public services, and undermine environmental laws and regulations. They do this by weakening and reducing regulatory oversight, democratic control, and public safeguards, and by giving private investors the power to sue governments in private dispute settlement panels through specific mechanisms designed to lock-in privatization.

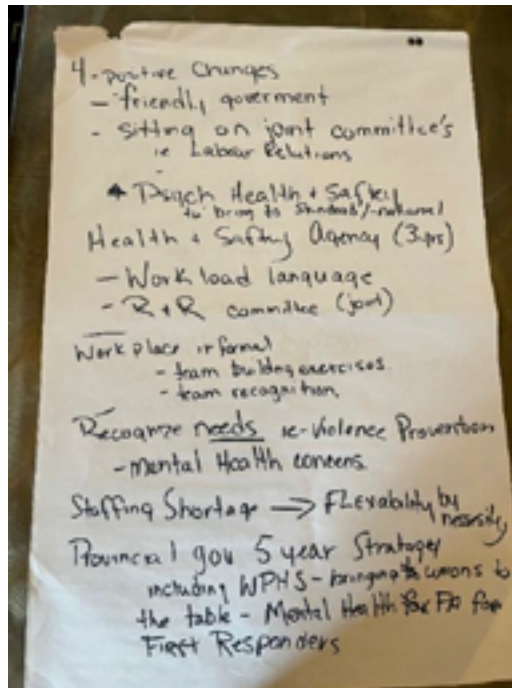
At the end of 2024, the US President-elect Donald Trump promised to end the free trade agreement between Canada and Mexico (CUSMA) and impose a universal 25% tariff. This reignited a longstanding debate about the dangers of free trade. By the end of 2024 there was renewed awareness about the fact that after many decades of promoting trade and continental interdependency, and an economy almost exclusively focused on exports to the US, successive Canadian politicians and business leaders created an economy that is now extremely vulnerable to US threats. This has moved many to call into question the very idea of neo-liberal corporate globalization, in other words free trade.

Health Human Resources

The health care labour shortage is at a critical stage. If action is not taken soon, more health care workers will leave the system, retiring, moving to for-profit clinics or leaving health care for other fields. Given the precarious state of health care staffing, the situation could get even worse if governments and employers do not act.

NUPGE convened an HHR meeting in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, on June 4-5, 2024. The meeting brought together almost 50 representatives from NUPGE Components to discuss the escalating HHR crisis in Canada's healthcare system and strategize for solutions.

The meeting's objective was to develop the foundation for further action NUPGE could take to press governments and employers to act on this meeting's recommendations to address healthcare worker shortages. Prior to the meeting, participants completed a survey identifying key HHR issues, the results of which informed the agenda and proceedings.



President Blundon reiterated the urgency of the crisis and NUPGE's commitment to national advocacy. He cited successful campaigns like pharmacare and anti-scab legislation, urging continued engagement on HHR issues. Members shared their experiences in the plenary and in breakout sessions. Much of the focus was on workplace conditions and their impact on retention, including work life balance. Participants detailed challenges like staffing shortages, burnout, lack of mental health support, and limited professional development opportunities.

Dr. Ivy Bourgeault, from the University of Ottawa, framed the HHR crisis as systemic and exacerbated by the pandemic. Dr. Bourgeault stressed prioritizing workforce retention through fair compensation, manageable workloads, and supportive environments. She also highlighted the urgent need for better data collection and coordination across jurisdictions to inform policy and planning.

Proposed solutions included better pay and benefits, improved work-life balance, supportive work environments, and smarter workload management. Participants emphasized the need for better data collection for workforce planning and targeted incentives for rural and underserved areas.



Figure 5 Participants at NUPGE HHR meeting, Saskatoon

The meeting also explored the federal government's role in addressing the HHR crisis. Participants proposed a federally funded and coordinated HHR strategy, drawing on international models. Recommendations included national training funds, harmonized credential recognition, federal tax incentives, and targeted rural investments. A pan-Canadian HHR strategy was deemed critical to address inter-provincial competition for healthcare professionals and ethical concerns surrounding international recruitment. The harmful impact of agency staffing corporations on the public health system was also raised, these agencies effectively turn public health care workers into private, for-profit contractors, dramatically increasing the cost to the public system.

The meeting concluded with a summary of positive solutions and recommendations, focusing on retention as a core strategy. These included investing in current workers, expanding education and training programs, enhancing workforce planning and data collection, addressing privatization, and establishing federal leadership. The overarching recommendation was to prioritize worker retention through competitive compensation, work-life balance initiatives, support and resources, positive work environments, strong leadership, career growth opportunities, and effective policy advocacy. The need for a comprehensive, pan-Canadian HHR strategy, with a focus on retention, recruitment, training, data collection, and inter-jurisdictional collaboration, was identified as a critical next step.

Income Inequality

Statistics Canada data shows income and wealth inequality are continuing to grow. Data released in October 2024 showed that the gap between the wealthy and low- and middle-income Canadians is at an all-time high.

Unfortunately, just as the growth in income and wealth inequality is similar to what we were seeing when NUPGE first started to talk about income inequality, so are the threats we're facing. In 2010 small-c conservative governments were trying to implement austerity measures to pay for the 2007–2008 financial crisis, letting the financial sector and the others who received billions in bailouts off the hook. Now we're being told that austerity measures are needed to pay for the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic—and again those most able to pay will be let off the hook.

NUPGE and its Components are continuing to make fighting income inequality a priority. That work takes place at the bargaining table and in pushing for policies to reduce income inequality. Our research, public awareness campaigns, and lobbying initiatives continue to show the negative impacts income inequality has on people. We have fought for measures to fight income inequality, including expanded government services, tax fairness, and modern economic strategies.

As a result of the work NUPGE and others have done, people are aware of income and wealth inequality. The biggest challenge now is to convincing people that there is more we can do about it. While there have been some gains for working people in Canada over the last 9 years, the modest measures the federal government has implemented haven't matched the extravagant claims government spokespeople have made. As a result of the gap between what's been done and those extravagant claims, many working people are wondering whether it is possible to do much to reduce income and wealth inequality.

Because of this situation in addition to showing that there is a problem, fighting income and wealth inequality means showing that there are workable solutions that will make a difference in people's lives, and that go far beyond what the current federal government has done. It's why NUPGE has called for action on issues ranging from cell phone costs to

extending an increase in Old Age Security to all seniors. It also why NUPGE is co-sponsoring the first Trade Union Tax Forum held in Canada.

The goal must be making sure that people know there is an alternative to austerity and that we don't have to accept high levels of income and wealth inequality.

International Solidarity

NUPGE remains committed to engaging in international solidarity. This includes speaking out against human rights violations, supporting humanitarian responses to crises, showing solidarity with workers and trade union movements around the world, and supporting migrant and refugee rights. NUPGE donates to international causes through the John Fryer Fund.

NUPGE continues to support the labour and social movements in Colombia, particularly through our relationship with the Colombian lawyers' collective, CAJAR. We met with CAJAR virtually and in Bogota during the PSI Inter-American Regional Conference. CAJAR received a significant decision in a case they brought to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which found that the Colombian state guilty of human rights violations. CAJAR organized an event to discuss the ruling and the implications for trade unions, which NUPGE representatives were able to attend.

This year, we supported the delegation of Ecuadorian women human rights defenders who were in Canada to raise awareness of environmental and human rights violations in Ecuador, particularly the impacts of Canadian mining companies, in the context of negotiations for a Canada-Ecuador free trade agreement. NUPGE also welcomed the delegation to speak with members at the Issues Forum and submitted a joint union letter to the Canadian government regarding the trade talks.

NUPGE issued solidarity statements with workers in Argentina in their national strike and with the Korean people and trade unions in their quick action to defend democracy. NUPGE has continued to speak out about the crisis in Gaza through statements and letters and working with coalitions. We continued to pressure the federal government on ending Russia's invasion of Ukraine and supporting the Ukrainian people. In Canada, NUPGE continued to support the migrant-led campaign for regularization and full and permanent immigration status for all. We also responded to the federal government's cap on international student permits and the impacts on the public post-secondary education sector.

Intimate Partner Violence

The Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI) continues to highlight the need for better funding for shelters and transition houses, affordable housing, public services for both those escaping violence and those perpetuating the violence. There is also the need for education within our school systems to reinforce that violence should never be used.

The ACWI is pleased that, due to pressure from unions, women's groups, and domestic violence groups, there is domestic violence leave in all provinces and territories. Several Components are negotiating domestic leave in their collective agreements.

At the February 2024 ACWI meeting, a survey of the committee revealed that most Components and provinces are using the term domestic violence. However, there are some Components, provinces and organizations that are now using the term intimate partner/domestic violence. It was agreed that the terminology that the ACWI will use will be intimate partner/domestic violence.

Opioid-Related Poison-Drug Overdose Crisis

Drug overdoses continue to be an epidemic in Canada. In 2016, 8 people died each day from drug overdoses. In 2024 over 20 people a day lost their lives to an overdose. This adds up to over 47,000 Canadians who have lost their lives to overdoses since 2016.

Many people are overdosing on lethal cocktails of synthetic opioids, typically fentanyl, mixed with stimulants like cocaine. Even though many overdoses are caused by toxic-drugs, many provinces that did have supervised injection sites are moving to close them and in provinces such as Ontario, are creating homeless and addiction hubs. Many experts and advocates for addiction services and supports stress that harm reduction strategies such as supervised injection sites help prevent overdoses and therefore save lives. At the same time, these sites provide a starting point for individuals to access social services like treatment or supportive housing.

Across Canada there is a growing number of political leaders proposing involuntary treatment for drug addiction. Given the shortage of treatment programs that currently exists, this option would require governments in Canada to seriously invest in these programs which should have happened when the epidemic began. Some experts have warned that involuntary treatment is an easy answer to a complex health and social problem. A taskforce created by the Canadian Society of Addiction Medicine reviewed worldwide research into the effectiveness of involuntary treatment and found that there is a lack of high-quality evidence to support or refute involuntary treatment and therefore more research is needed to inform health policy.

The National Union continues to highlight the need for the *Canada Health Act* to be amended to include community-based mental health and substance use health care services to ensure that there is a guaranteed pan-Canadian equal access to supports and programs that are desperately needed to save lives.

Pandemic Treaty

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, member states of the World Health Organization (WHO) initiated an Intergovernmental Negotiating Body process to negotiate and draft a multilateral international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. Dubbed the Pandemic Treaty (PT), its aim is to “ensure better preparedness and equitable response for future pandemics, and to advance the principles of equity, solidarity and health for all.”

In 2024, the National Union continued to monitor the PT negotiations and implementation to ensure that workers’ rights and interests are recognized and protected by the treaty. The National Union undertook this campaign by continuing to work in solidarity with some of the largest labour unions in Canada and Quebec that represent health workers and care workers. This work was done with the support of Public Services International (PSI), the global union federation representing public services, health care workers, and care workers around the world, to which we are affiliated.

Pensions

The National Union’s work on pensions is focused on supporting the work of our Components’ pension fund trustees and pension activists and addressing issues related to federal legislation and pensions. An important part of this support is the Pensions Working Group, which has been holding an annual in-person meeting. In 2024, the Pensions Working Group met on October 31 and November 1 in Halifax.

Issues discussed during the working group meeting included legislative and regulatory changes affecting pension plans and the use of tax havens by pension plans. There was also discussion of attempts to professionalize boards and restrict the ability of union members to sit on the boards of their own pension plans.

What was also important was the chance for participants to raise issues they were encountering and how they are responding. The trustees and activists attending the Pensions Working Group bring a lot of expertise to the table and the opportunity to exchange of information means that expertise is shared with other Components.

An ongoing project has been updating NUPGE’s Pensions Manual. It was last updated in 2008, and a lot has changed since then. The Pensions Working Group provided valuable feedback in how to make the manual easier to use, including breaking it up into modules

on specific topics. The first [three modules have been released](#) and are on the NUPGE website.

Presumptive Legislation for Occupational Psychological/Mental Injury

There is alarming data on mental injury among justice workers (JWs). Scientific research published in reputable Canadian peer-reviewed journals reveals that JWs have substantially more difficulties with mental injury than the general population. The evidence shows that JWs are screening positive for high rates of clinically significant symptoms consistent with one or more mental disorders like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, mood disorder, and substance abuse.

Some JWs (such as firefighters, paramedics, and police officers) are almost 4.5 times more likely than the general population to screen positive for mental injury. Among all JWs, the worst off are correctional workers: they are 5.5 times more likely than the general population to report symptoms of mental injury.

We will fight for public policies that recognize workplace stressors that cause both chronic psychological injuries (developed gradually and cumulatively over time in response to a series of events or to multiple exposures to workplace stressors) and acute mental injury.

We will lobby for policies that include both traumatic and nontraumatic workplace stress triggers. Nontraumatic workplace stress is triggered by continuous or multiple exposures to significant workplace stressors that do psychological harm but don't rise to the level of trauma.

Union-Led Advisory Table (ULAT)

President Blundon represents NUPGE on the Union-Led Advisory Table (ULAT). ULAT, made up of labour leaders from across the country, provides advice to the federal government on how to support workers through disruptions in the labour market, like climate change, new technologies, and an aging workforce. The discussions have looked at issues such as training and skills development, retirement security, addressing staffing shortages, and improving equity. During 2024, ULAT met monthly and there was work on developing recommendations in between meetings.

The ULAT mandate was discussed at many of NUPGE's committee and working group meetings this year, as well as the National Executive Board. This helped to inform NUPGE's input to the ULAT discussions. At ULAT, NUPGE emphasized that investing in robust public services is the key to withstanding labour market disruptions, meeting the needs of Canadians, and transitioning to a more equitable and sustainable economy. In particular, NUPGE put forward recommendations on addressing the health human resources crisis, investing in the public post-secondary education system, and taking steps to strengthen equity and inclusion.

Valuing Care

The National Union has worked for decades to highlight the issue of care—both the rights and dignity of those receiving care and the rights of workers that provide care. The Advisory Committee on Women’s Issues has highlighted the need for child care and elder care through its work on life/work balance. It has also examined the issue of women continuing to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid caregiving and being over-represented in care jobs because of gender stereotypes and social norms. Black, racialized, immigrant, and migrant women are also over-represented in care work and face racism and discrimination.

Care systems continue to be in crisis due to decades of underfunding, neglect, deregulation, and privatization. Too often, care services are fragmented rather than delivered through coherent systems. Workers in the care economy face diverse challenges, but low wages, poor working conditions, precarious employment, and high turnover are common. Staffing shortages that predated the pandemic have worsened. Many working in this sector are reporting increased levels of stress and mental health issues due to overwork, burnout, and increased violence.

The National Union continues to highlight the need for increased funding and policies for public care services. Ensuring that we have strong public care services not only helps Canadians but also is a powerful economic stimulus tool with economic and social benefits including job creation and increased GDP.



NUPGE Social Media

NUPGE continues to share most of our content on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Our use of social media has helped garner interest in many of our campaigns such as climate change, Just Transition, and fairness for forest firefighters. We use social media to share statements on many issues and to amplify the voices of our members, our Components and our allies.

As a union, we use our voice to highlight the issues we care about. We continue to celebrate and mark days of significance throughout the year. Our online posts allow us to share our perspective on certain events and promote issues that we are fighting for.



NUPGE Website

Our website, nupge.ca, is a space for the National Union to create short commentaries on major issues facing our members and the public. Our posts provide shorter analysis on issues like privatization, Component bargaining victories, and the crisis in health care. We also host our research papers, campaigns, and calls to action on the site.

Statistics

In 2024, we had 53,112 unique visitors to our website. This is a 15,751 (42%) increase over 37,361 in 2023.

Our website was viewed 93,829 times in 2024, which is a 56,469 (151%) increase from 71,624 page views in 2023.

Table 1. Annual Visitors and Page Views

	Unique visitors	Page views
2024	53,112	93,829
2023	37,361	37,361
Increase	15,751	56,468
% increase	42%	151%

The following two tables show the most popular posts (stories) and most viewed sections of the website for 2024

Table 2. Top ten stories on NUPGE.ca

Story	Views
James Clancy (1950-2024): A visionary leader in labour and social justice	2,077
Scholarship deadline extended	1,727
Parliament to vote on ceasefire motion	1,396
National Indigenous Peoples Day 2024	1,064
Support LCBO workers in their fight to protect public services and quality jobs	1,001
Joint Statement: Canada must suspend arms trade with Israel	947
Pensioners no longer at the back of the line	845
Corporate profits up by 54% since before the pandemic	581
Private sector pay increases significantly higher than in the public sector	465
National Union Scholarship winners for 2023	434

NUPGE

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Secretary-Treasurer	Jason MacLean

National Executive Board

Vice President

BCGEU/NUPGE

Paul Finch

HSABC/NUPGE

Kane Tse

HSAA/NUPGE

Mike Parker

Leanne Alfaro

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MGEU/NUPGE

Kyle Ross

Kimberley Lynne

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Gaurav Sharma

OPSEU/NUPGE

JP Hornick

Laurie Nancekivell

NBU/NUPGE

Susie Proulx-Daigle

Norman Bourque

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Indigenous Representative

Hali Topinka (SGEU/NUPGE)

Young Worker Representative

Tyler Bollinger (SGEU/NUPGE)

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Michael Temelini

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Administrative Representatives

Sandra Megeney
Laura Rashotte
Chole Truong

NUPGE Meetings

National Executive Board Meetings

March 26-27	National Executive Board Meeting, Vancouver
July 15-17	National Executive Board Meeting, Halifax
September 17-18	National Executive Board Meeting, Virtual
December 10-11	National Executive Board Meeting, Toronto

Meetings of Committees and Working Groups

January 30	Finance Meeting
February 12	Special Workers with Disabilities Committee
February 12	CHC Lobby Meeting
February 12	CHC Lobby Event
February 12-13	Communications Officers Working Group
February 20	Special Pride Committee
February 21-22	Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
February 27-28	Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee
March 5	Anti-Privatization Working Group
March 6	IT Component Staff
March 19	Advisory Committee on the Environment
March 21	Anti-Racism Committee
April 2	Component Liquor and Cannabis Working Group
April 8-9	Canadian Blood Services Multi Union
April 9	Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues
April 17	Legal Strategies Component Coordinating Committee
April 18-19	Indigenous Issues Committee
May 27-28	Impact Hub Meeting
June 3-5	Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat
June 13	Post-Secondary Education Working Group
August 17-23	24th Annual Leadership Development School
September 12-13	Anti-Racism Committee
September 24	National Political Action Committee
September 27-28	Correctional Officers and Youth Facility Workers
October 1	Component Liquor and Cannabis Working Group
October 2-4	Issues Forum #3
October 3-4	Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
October 8-9	Communications Officers Working Group
October 21	Indigenous Issues Committee

October 22-23	IT Component Staff
October 29	Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee
Oct 31–November 1	Pensions Working Group
November 4-5	Anti-Privatization Conference
November 7	Legal Strategies Component Coordinating Committee
November 12	Component Researchers Working Group
November 26	Wildland Firefighters Strategy Session
December 2-3	Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat
December 5-6	Wildland Firefighters Workshop + Follow-Up

Publications and Submissions

February 2024	Backgrounder: Equal Treatment for Forest Firefighters
March 2024	2023: Worst Year on Record of Reported and Unreported Occupational Health and Safety Instances for Forest Firefighters: OH&S reports across all jurisdictions indicate instances of entrapment, several fatalities, and numerous injuries among forest firefighters
July 2024	Forest/Wildland Firefighters Fact Sheet – Myths and Realities
July 2024	Equal Treatment for Forest Firefighters
August 2024	Mental Injury among Just Workers (updated)
September 2024	Pensions Manual – Module 1 Pensions are Important to Workers and Their Unions
October 2024	Pensions Manual – Module 2 A Brief History of Pensions in Canada
October 2024	Pensions Manual – Module 6 How Much Pension will an Individual Need?
November 2024	COP Climate Summit and Why It Matters for Workers Backgrounder



2025

**MID YEAR
REPORT**

Dear Friends,

We are almost halfway through 2025 and it's proving to be challenging times. This report provides an accounting of the work and issues that the National Union has undertaken so far.

Trump's threats of tariffs on steel and aluminum, on vehicles and auto parts, and on imports from Canada started in force. His denigration of our country as the "51st state" created the biggest uproar in decades. Never has an American President challenged our sovereignty in such bold, outrageous terms. Not surprisingly, Canadians immediately pushed back, highlighted by Mike Myers on Saturday Night Live wearing his Canadian hockey jersey, saying "Elbows Up."



And since then, that's exactly what we've been doing.

Workers in the tariff impacted industries are already feeling the repercussions of Trump's actions with layoffs at auto plants and car manufacturers. NUPGE, with our allies in labour and civil society, will have to push governments further to ensure the government provides more support for these workers with measures that will help families sustain this turbulent time.

Because these are more than just words: an injury to one is an injury to all.

We need to be there for our private sector siblings, just as they will need to be there for us. When the economy faces upheaval, governments turn to austerity measures. We have learned this lesson before.

But because we've been here before, we know how to use our collective power to withstand the blows. By working together, by promoting the good work our members do, and by showing the public that we're on their side, we can ride out this storm.

Adding to the uncertainty are the results of the federal election. NUPGE registered for the second time for Third Party Status so we could share our materials to help inform members of where the political parties stand on issues. We promoted ads on social media to reach a broader audience with our research.

The Liberals, with new leader Mark Carney, were elected to a slim minority government. The Leader of the Conservative party lost his seat in the riding he has held for more than 20 years. The New Democrats lost party status despite the influential role they played in the last Parliament, pressuring the government to implement the beginning of pharmacare and dental care.

There is still a lot that we do not know about our new Prime Minister, but he's talked about increasing military spending, developing our natural resources, tax cuts, capping the total number

of [temporary workers](#) and international students, and putting a hiring freeze on the public service. All of this points to difficulties for our members.

But we will be ready. Because as this all goes on, we have been strategizing, organizing, and mobilizing our members across the country. We are standing up for post-secondary workers as they face employers looking to reduce costs due to the government's cap on international students. We are fighting for healthcare professionals who are burning out in a system in crisis. We are supporting workers across the country who are bargaining for better wages and working conditions, especially those brave workers who have gone on strike for a fair deal.



And we must always celebrate our successes. One of the biggest victories of 2025 is the win by the hard-working members of OPSEU/SEFPO/NUPGE who fought tooth and nail for two decades to unionize the precarious, part-time workers at community colleges. This has been one of the largest organizing drives in the country's history.

It's this strength and dedication that makes us optimistic about the future. NUPGE members are steadfast activists no matter the issue. As 2025 continues, we will continue to challenge our governments to make decisions that benefit those struggling and in need. We will continue to counter injustice with compassion, protect and promote human rights, and work to improve the lives of NUPGE members and people everywhere.

Working in Solidarity

Whether working with members in our Components, affiliates in the House of Labour, or our allies in civil society, we strive to create better world. Better wages, better working conditions, better pensions.

Through our connections to the international labour movement, we lend our support and expertise to those fighting the same issues in their own countries. We will help protect those who are under threat and remain committed to upholding human rights at home and abroad.

The National Executive Board

Our National Executive Board (NEB) members are fiercely committed to building a strong, principled union. They provide thoughtful counsel and are not afraid to lead by example. They ensure that decisions are shaped by people with deep knowledge of local realities and sector-

specific issues across regions. The NEB provides oversight, ensuring that resources are used responsibly, policies are followed, and decisions are made democratically. They help members connect to national campaigns, ensure their concerns are heard, and transform grassroots advocacy into national impact.

I am grateful to their patience, good humour, and guidance.

NUPGE Staff

We are fortunate to have a team that is always up for a challenge. No matter what we throw at them, they perform with professionalism, passion, and patience. Under the leadership of Managing Director Len Bush, and Director of Communications, Political Action, and Campaigns Jeanne d'Arc Umurungi, our staff members work together cohesively, producing high quality research, innovative campaigns, and strategic government relations. We appreciate their dedication and commitment to NUPGE and the labour movement.

NUPGE Members

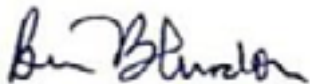
To every NUPGE member: thank you for your courage, your commitment, and your unwavering solidarity. Being a trade unionist means standing up—often in the face of adversity—to demand something better. It means fighting not only for ourselves, but for each other. For the person beside us at work. For the worker we'll never meet in another province. For the next generation.

Our movement is rooted in values that can't be bought or broken—fairness, equity, and justice. These aren't just words; they are the foundation of everything we do. They drive our campaigns, shape our demands, and fuel our fight against governments and employers who put profit before people.

But we are more than resistance. We are builders—of better workplaces, stronger communities, and a more just world. We believe that meaningful work, safety, dignity, and security are not privileges. They are rights.

Together, we've made change. Together, we'll keep pushing. Because when workers rise together, there is nothing we can't do.

In solidarity,



Bert Blundon

NUPGE Working with Components

Strategic advice, research, government relations, and campaign creation are just some of the ways the National Union has supported Components over the last year. Our goal is to build capacity for our unions, for our members, and for the labour movement.

An important way we support our Components is when we coordinate workers from across the country to share insights, develop common strategies and build solidarity. These gatherings take the form of working groups, committees (and special committees), and conferences.

Advisory Committee on the Environment

The Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE) met via videoconference on April 8, 2025. They discussed the current political context, where climate action is being de-prioritized in the response to Trump's tariffs and during the federal election. However, it is more important than ever.

ACE discussed the challenges with engaging members and the public on climate change when there are so many issues people care about. They also identified different strategies to support engagement, such as the importance of education and the opportunity to connect the environment to occupational health and safety. There has been some progress on negotiating collective agreement language on the environment, but there are many priorities in bargaining.

ACE gave input on a letter template to the provincial governments on water issues and discussed some issues in their own provinces or cities. Committee members shared updates on work Components are doing on the environment and climate change.

Advisory Committee on Women's Issues

The Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI) met once in the spring of 2025.

Participants were provided with a link to the 2025 NUPGE Triennial Convention NEB resolutions that pertain to women's issues. The subjects for these resolutions included Period Poverty in Canada, Intimate Partner/Domestic Violence, the Cost of Being a Woman: The Pink Tax Phenomenon, Valuing Care and Solidarity with the Rohingya.

At the October 2024 ACWI meeting, participants expressed interest in developing an NEB resolution on the issue of women and health. This resolution was created and included feedback from that discussion. Committee members were interested in prioritizing the resolutions that pertain to women's issues: women and health, intimate partner/domestic violence, and the valuing care. Therefore, a discussion was held about the prioritization of resolutions.

The committee was advised that the women's caucus at the NUPGE 2025 Convention will be held at noon on Friday, June 13 at the Crowne Plaza hotel. The committee discussed possible subjects. The consensus was that the caucus subject should focus on women's health, especially the lack of research specific to women's health issues. Discussion on this topic should be the first step in addressing the issue, focusing on attainable goals.

The committee was informed that the National Union is planning a women's conference in November 2025. A discussion about the theme was held. The consensus was that the conference should incorporate a theme associated with women's health. The committee stressed that discussions should be held regarding the lack of research, intersectionality, working with other advocacy groups dealing with the issue, racialized women, and workers and what they face, and actions that can be taken to highlight this important issue.

Advisory Committee on Young Workers' Issues

The Advisory Committee on Young Workers Issues met online in February 2025. As raised in previous meetings, connecting with young workers remains an issue for multiple Components. Even when approached directly with flyers that give them details on how to connect with other young workers, there's very little uptake.

That said, Components are committed to increasing young worker engagement. SGEU is in the process of designing a survey for young workers to gauge their interest in union activities. NAPE is partnering with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour to exhibit alongside other unions at community colleges and job fairs. OPSEU/SEFPO is in the process of relaunching their young workers mentorship program.

Participants also reviewed material created by NUPGE, had a discussion on the upcoming federal election, and discussed possible future areas of focus for the committee.

Anti-Racism Committee (ARC)

The Anti-Racism Committee held a videoconference on March 19, 2025. Eight participants from seven Components were in attendance.

Attendees of this meeting discussed the upcoming federal election, privatization of public services, especially health services, and election issues. The Terms of Reference were also discussed.

Anticipating a federal call, the committees discussed how different party policies would impact racialized workers, their members, including how

- privatization of services such as health care further limiting racialized peoples' access to services,
- government rollbacks on childcare and adoptive supports will disproportionately impact children of colour,
- issues around international student visa issues exacerbate underfunding, and
- the ways in which the Notwithstanding Clause can be used to circumvent human rights, and protect foreign workers. One topic that was reiterated throughout the meeting was the necessity for a research strategy on demographic data, especially among members, and in their workplaces.

The committee was informed of upcoming events and deadlines, including the April 14 deadline to submit resolutions for convention via their Component. The NUPGE Convention will be happening June 13-15 in Fredericton, New Brunswick, and the All-Committee meeting October 1-3 in Ottawa, Ontario.

Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat (CHPS)

CHPS had a meeting in April 2025, which was the first of its two meetings. This meeting was held in Toronto and took place during the federal election. There were two presentations on the federal election, the first outlining the positions of the main parties and the implications of each, while the second was on the election result and the plans for pushing public health care forward during the upcoming parliament featuring a Liberal minority. Steven Staples from the Canadian Health Coalition was the guest speaker for this discussion.

The core of CHPS meetings is Component Reports. These reports revealed widespread and deepening concerns across Components about workforce shortages, expanding privatization, and insufficient government accountability. Allied health professionals are facing rising vacancy rates, growing workloads, and burnout, particularly in rural and specialized areas like diagnostics. Many provinces report increased reliance on staffing agencies, loss of AHCPs to private clinics, and minimal progress on international credential recognition. While some unions secured notable bargaining gains, others remained in slow or stalled negotiations. Mental health and workplace violence remain urgent issues, with some Components introducing new benefit top-ups or safety committees. Campaigns against privatization are gaining momentum, but the threats are growing. Components shared many positive developments and learned from other Components as part of the question-and-answer component related to the reports.

NUPGE also presented an update on the 'Spotlight on Healthcare' campaign, revisiting the results of the member survey and some of the ways Components used the information to highlight the

struggles and solutions members presented in the survey. This three-year campaign is ongoing, and further updates will be provided at future CHPS meetings.

Two final key pieces of the meeting focused on engaging the new government and parliament to recognize the contributions of allied health professionals through an official week of recognition. The final dates for this week are still to be finalized. Lobbying was also discussed with HSABC's successful Community Liaison Program presented as an example of building an ongoing relationship with elected representatives. The next CHPS meeting will be in late 2025.

Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee

Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee (CBAC) provides a forum to discuss bargaining issues and strategies across the country. The committee met in person on March 25–26, 2025. Participants discussed the political context—namely, the Trump tariff threats and the federal election—and the impacts on workers. The discussion illustrated how politics deeply affects bargaining, especially in the public sector where the government is the employer.

In addition to reporting out on bargaining updates in their Components, participants discussed several specific issues including the challenges of essential services agreements. CBAC shared and discussed language in a number of areas: rights for Indigenous workers, protections for gender diverse workers, intimate partner/domestic violence, environment and climate change, and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in health care workplaces.

The committee also discussed artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace and heard a presentation from the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) about work they have been doing to develop collective agreement language on AI.

Component Communications Officers Working Group

Component Communication Officers met on January 21 and 22, 2025 in Halifax. The meeting marked the first time communication officers met outside of Ottawa.

Fifteen participants (online and in person) from nine Components shared information on the provincial activities, legislative landscape, and campaigns from across the country. NUPGE President Bert Blundon provided a summary of national issues facing the union, its Components, and our allies. Jason MacLean, NUPGE Secretary-Treasurer also participated in discussions.

NUPGE representatives presented updates on the Fairness for Wildland/Forest Firefighters campaign, citing success in its government relations efforts to put the issue to the Ministers, and build support within the firefighter community.

Participants were given updates on the status of the national health care member survey and campaign and thanked for their assistance in circulating the survey. Their efforts helped make the

project successful already. Over 6,500 healthcare members took part in the survey, voicing their concerns about their working conditions and the healthcare system in general.

For the next steps of the campaign, Carlene Variyan, Associate Vice-President at Summa Strategies, spoke with participants about the federal landscape and the communications tactics NUPGE would be employing in the coming days.

Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Representatives

At the one meeting of Component Liquor Board and Cannabis Retail Representatives in 2025, privatization continued to be a focus, but health and safety issues were also a concern.

There was a discussion about the impact of the push to remove inter-provincial trade barriers. Participants agreed that care needed to be taken not to undermine our public liquor and cannabis retailing and distribution systems.

Ferry and Marine Workers

A meeting of the NUPGE Ferry and Marine Workers Representatives was held on January 9, 2025, by videoconference with four participants from three Components. A roundtable discussion was held in which each Component was invited to identify the most important issues facing ferry and marine workers in their province. The following topics were discussed:

- Cost of Living, Recruitment & Retention
- ITF Automation & National Security
- Aging Infrastructure
- Safe Manning & Automation
- Deregulation
- Stagnant Wages
- Rates of pay
- Low Recruitment & Retention = Low Staffing Levels
- Privatization Concerns
- Lunch Breaks & Working Conditions
- Aging Infrastructure
- Transport Canada & Safety Concerns Regarding Single-Screw Vessels
- Service Cuts & Subsidies
- Funding Shortage

The meeting concluded with a brief discussion about topics for future meetings, and how to engage others to participate.

Indigenous Issues Committee (IIC)

The Indigenous Issues Committee met in Ottawa from February 20 to 21, 2025. Eleven participants from seven components were present.

Participants discussed the necessity of Indigenous peoples' representation in Union leadership, and to map the demographics of membership to ensure diversity among workers is represented in union activities and collective bargaining. They also discussed how education for settlers on the colonization of Canada is required to better understand how equitable policies in collective agreements, like cultural leave or same/similar relationship language, are created to advance reconciliation and address culturally specific needs of Indigenous peoples.

Other discussions included developing an Elder Protocol for NUPGE, on how to build relationships with communities in a good way when event planning and travelling. The group saw this as something both NUPGE staff and Component staff would find useful. The group acknowledged that the protocol would have to be somewhat generic as each Indigenous culture is different (e.g. some Elders accept tobacco, some accept cedar, some accept tea, etc.), and would have to be flexible to ensure there is space to change the process when the Elder indicates something else is part of their practice.

The committee discussed Resolution #75 from the 2022 NUPGE Convention and brainstormed the content of a letter to the federal party leaders to adapt an impartial police investigations process, to hold the police to greater accountability for the injustices police authorities inflict on Indigenous peoples. This letter was sent from NUPGE's president to federal party leaders on April 14, 2025.

The committee was informed of upcoming events and deadlines, including the April 14 deadline to submit resolutions for the 2025 convention via their Component, the All-Committee meeting to be held October 1-3 in Ottawa, Ontario, and the NUPGE Convention happening June 13-15 in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Participants discussed ways to incorporate Indigenous presence in the convention, including providing Indigenous art in the convention kit bags, to have an Elder open the convention, and how to accommodate smudging.

Legal Strategies Working Group

The Legal Strategies Working Group met on May 8, 2025. This working group brings together Components' legal counsel, staff, and leadership to discuss legal issues, including court challenges. Participants share updates from their provinces and unions. They discuss, and share analysis on, issues and cases of common interest from across the country. NUPGE's legal counsel attends these meetings and offers updates and analysis. Between meetings, NUPGE shares updates or materials on notable cases or legal issues.

Special Pride Committee

The Special Pride Committee met online in January 2025. When discussing suggestions for the NUPGE convention policy paper on 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, participants suggested framing discrimination against 2SLGBTQIA+ workers as an occupational health and safety issue to make the connection that 2SLGBTQIA+ issues are union issues. Participants also suggested the paper highlight the danger of governments rolling back the rights of any group of people. The current attack on transgender rights could be a canary in the coal mine, indicating that the rights of other groups of people can and will be rolled back.



When discussing how unions and employers can be more inclusive, it was pointed out that many changes don't cost anything to implement. Things like updating forms to make sure no one is deadnamed, changing "paternity leave" to "parental leave", and changing other gendered language to gender-inclusive language are all cost free, easy changes that can make a big difference to transgender and gender-diverse workers. Another way unions can be more inclusive is by offering advanced steward training that enables stewards to work with specific equity-deserving groups more effectively.

Participants had a good discussion on gender-inclusive alternatives to "Brother/Sister" as well as the pros and cons of expanding existing women's committees into committees for women and gender-diverse people. They also reviewed the draft Terms of Reference, discussed the anti-transgender bills and policies being enacted across Canada (specifically Alberta [Bills 26, 27, and 29](#), Saskatchewan [Bill 137](#), and New Brunswick [Policy 713](#) which was later revised to remove the discriminatory elements), and the upcoming federal election.

Special Workers with Disabilities Committee

The Special Workers with Disabilities Committee met online in January 2025. They reviewed the draft Terms of Reference and discussed the direction of committee activities beyond advising on how to implement the resolutions that will be passed at the upcoming convention. The consensus was that the Components would benefit from a list of ways to make union buildings, virtual events, and event spaces accessible.

Participants were asked to suggest topics that could be covered in a policy paper on workers with disabilities that will be taken to convention. Participants had a good discussion on accommodation

for people with disabilities and the duty to accommodate in each province. They also discussed remote work and the danger of recalling all workers back to work—including those with pre-existing accommodations—under the guise of “fairness”.

Participants also had an in-depth discussion on the Canada Disability Benefit, the Disability Tax Credit, and the upcoming federal election, and were given updates on NUPGE’s 2025 convention and NUPGE’s All Committees Meeting.

Wildland Firefighters

A meeting of the NUPGE Wildland Firefighters Working Group was held from February 27 to 28, 2025 in Ottawa. There were 16 participants from six Components and two guests from the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees.

The main highlight of the meeting was a comprehensive discussion about the NUPGE campaign to amend the National Occupational Classification (NOC) to accurately classify the responsibilities, and job duties, and public safety roles of wildland firefighters, and the need for continued efforts to ensure their work is accurately recognized and compensated. The subject was also raised regarding the 2024 and 2025 fire seasons. A roundtable discussion was held to review the 2024 fire season, specifically its duration, intensity, and the number of fires. Also, they discussed the 2025 deployment of Canadian crews to the infamous California wildfires.



There was a roundtable discussion on the status of presumptive coverage for occupational diseases, cancer, and psychological injuries in various provinces.

The firefighters also engaged in a comprehensive discussion regarding their concerns about health and safety, including food and sanitation Issues, accommodation and living conditions, contractor issues and management challenges, autonomy and safety protocols in the field, the WFX-FIT test (concerns, the duty to accommodate workers who fail or refuse to take the test, and the impact of fit testing on Indigenous Northern Communities).

Another important topic of discussion was the challenges facing wildfire crews regarding staffing, recruitment, retention, and seasonal contracts.

NUPGE Working with the Labour Movement

Just like the solidarity with our Components, when unions work together, we're not just a series of separate fights—we become a force that governments and employers can't ignore. Coordinated action across unions makes strikes, campaigns, and bargaining efforts more effective.

Major victories—like paid sick days, pension protections, and health and safety standards—have come from coordinated labour pressure, not individual unions acting alone.

By working together across sectors, we can better address systemic issues like racism, climate change, privatization, and inequality—challenges no single union can solve alone.

Canadian Labour Congress

Through their membership in a National Union, Component members are also affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The CLC is the largest labour central in Canada and represents 3.3 million workers.

NUPGE participates in the various committees and working groups of the CLC. We also play a significant role in their triennial constitutional convention.

The leadership at the CLC has moved quickly to reconstitute its committees and embark on some important actions since taking office in 2021. CLC committees are disbanded after each convention and then start anew shortly afterward.



CLC Disability Rights Working Group

The CLC held a special online meeting of the Disability Rights Working Group in February 2025. The purpose was to test and provide input on the draft tools from [Inclusive Design for Employment Access \(IDEA\)](#). IDEA is a social innovation laboratory (SIL) that is strengthening the capacity of Canadian workplaces to fully include persons with disabilities.

Each affiliate was asked to report on their work on accessibility and share their most impactful strategies, tools, and resources. The affiliates were also asked to identify gaps in available tools and resources. Many of the affiliates in attendance were designing or had completed an accessibility audit of their unions and one had an equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) strategic plan.

Staff from IDEA gave a presentation on workplace systems framework for organizational capacity building and introduced their draft Pulse-Check Questionnaire. Committee members were asked to give input on the domains the questionnaire measures and general input on the questionnaire.

CLC Employment Insurance Advisory Committee

The CLC Employment Insurance Advisory Committee met in early 2025 to prepare with the EI Forum, including a discussion of what issues to raise. Much of the discussion at both the CLC Employment Insurance Advisory Committee and the EI Forum was on what would be needed to help workers who lose their jobs as a result of new U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods. As the temporary measures put in place during the pandemic have been allowed to expire, there are concerns about what will happen if there is a spike in applications or the number of workers losing their jobs who will not be eligible for EI.

Positively, progress is being made in re-establishing the tripartite appeals system for EI.

CLC International Group

NUPGE works with allies through the CLC International Group, an informal discussion and coordination group that brings together affiliate staff working on international issues. Through this working group, affiliates share information, discuss issues they are working on, and coordinate where appropriate. At the April meeting, there was a discussion on how to strengthen our work together on solidarity with migrants.

At these meetings, the CLC also provides updates from the international bodies it participates in, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). There are often presentations on topics of interest.

At the April 2025 meeting, there were presentations on the ongoing trade and tariffs issues and on civil society organizing ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

CLC Legal Challenges Coordinating Committee

This committee works to build cooperation and coordination among labour allies to take legal challenges forward for labour rights. Affiliates also share updates on important cases and decisions that impact workers and unions, like NUPGE's Legal Strategies Working Group. The committee is co-chaired by Leigh Sprague of the New Brunswick Union (NBU/NUPGE). The committee met on May 8, 2025.

CLC Pension Advisory Committee

The CLC Pension Advisory Committee has looked at how the impact the economic disruption caused by the Trump administration could affect pension plans. A specific concern was the impact on pension plan investments. There was also discussion about what political parties are saying about pensions during the election campaign.

CLC Training and Technology Advisory Committee

The CLC Training and Technology Advisory Committee looked at the Artificial Intelligence Strategy for the Federal Public Service and the potential problems it could cause. There has been concern about the lack of consultation and the fact potential problems related to artificial intelligence are not being addressed. For NUPGE members, a concern is the possibility that provincial government will copy the federal government's approach.

NUPGE Working with Our Allies

Working with allies is vital because no union wins lasting change alone. Allies—whether community groups, social justice organizations, or advocacy coalitions—help unions extend their message beyond the workplace. Together, we can mobilize more people, influence public, and apply greater pressure on decision-makers.

When unions support housing advocates, climate activists, or anti-racism groups—and they support us in return—we create a web of solidarity. That solidarity is powerful in moments of crisis, like strikes, legislative threats, or cuts to public services.

Alliances help counter the influence of corporate power by organizing people around a common cause. By building trust across movements, we strengthen democratic participation and ensure more voices— especially marginalized ones—are heard.

Canadian Health Coalition

NUPGE Secretary-Treasurer Jason MacLean assumed the Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) Chair role in 2024 and continues to provide leadership for this important organization. The CHC held a board meeting in March where it set the agenda for the federal election and for the upcoming year. After agreeing to register as a Third-Party for the election, Jason MacLean recused himself from the Chair role until after the election was over to avoid potential conflicts of interest as NUPGE also is a registered Third-Party.

The CHC Lobby was postponed due to the prorogation of parliament and the election call. This was unforeseen and the CHC decided to join several groups, including NUPGE, in hosting a conference designed to put health care on the agenda for the upcoming election – SOS Medicare 3.0.

In addition to SOS Medicare, the CHC has confirmed an October Research Roundtable and ongoing advocacy work, but the Lobby will be postponed until 2026.

Canadians for Tax Fairness

With the attempts to use the threats of tariffs from the Trump administration to justify cuts to public services, NUPGE's work with [Canadians for Tax Fairness \(C4TF\)](#) is vitally important.

C4TF has been showing that there is an alternative to cutting spending on public services. With tax fairness, both the federal government and provincial governments will have the ability to provide the public services we need and to support the economic transition that we face, because of the actions of the Trump administration.

C4TF has also looked at the role that income inequality has played in the affordability crisis. Their recent work includes a report, [Canada's affordability divide: How the 1%'s rise left millions behind](#), that looks at how the shift in wealth from low- and middle-income families to the 1% left many people struggling. They've also looked at the [danger of companies using the debate around tariffs as an opportunity for price gouging](#) and the role that an excess profits tax could play in preventing this from happening.

Child Care Now

NUPGE is a member of Child Care Now, the national child care advocacy organization. Child Care Now advocates for a publicly funded, inclusive, quality, non-profit child care system. Child Care Now has been engaged in the efforts to build a Canada-wide child care system and maintaining pressure on government to expand public, non-profit child care and address the workforce challenges in the sector, including pushing for improvements to wages, benefits, pensions, and working conditions.

In March 2025, Child Care Now convened a meeting of child care advocates to discuss how to defend the Canada-wide early learning and child care system. Child Care Now launched the campaign, [Stand on Guard for Child Care](#), in April. In response to the economic instability and tariff threats, the campaign called on governments and political parties to strengthen and expand the \$10-a-day child care system being built in Canada.

Climate Action Network

NUPGE is a member of Climate Action Network Canada (CAN-Rac), a coalition of organizations—for environment, labour, faith groups, and civil society groups. NUPGE participates in regular CAN-Rac meetings, during which members discuss national and regional policy updates and share research, campaigns, and other initiatives. Climate justice is a priority for CAN-Rac, evident in its efforts on advancing a Just Transition and on international solidarity, and in its internal work, such as updating its Charter, which was finalized in January 2024. CAN-Rac also does education, analysis, and advocacy related to federal policy. This winter and spring, CAN-Rac has been convening and supporting its members and allies around the federal election.

Green Economy Network

The Green Economy Network (GEN) is a coalition of labour, environmental and social justice groups working to build a greener, more equitable economy in Canada. NUPGE is a member and participates in the management committee. Through GEN, member organizations meet to discuss common priorities, share their work, and coordinate where appropriate.

This year so far, GEN has been responding to the Trump tariff threats by calling for a green industrial policy. Together with Blue Green Canada, GEN hosted a panel discussion as part of the Broadbent Institute's annual Progress Summit in April 2025. The session focused on green industrial strategy and how we move forward. GEN is also working on a podcast series.

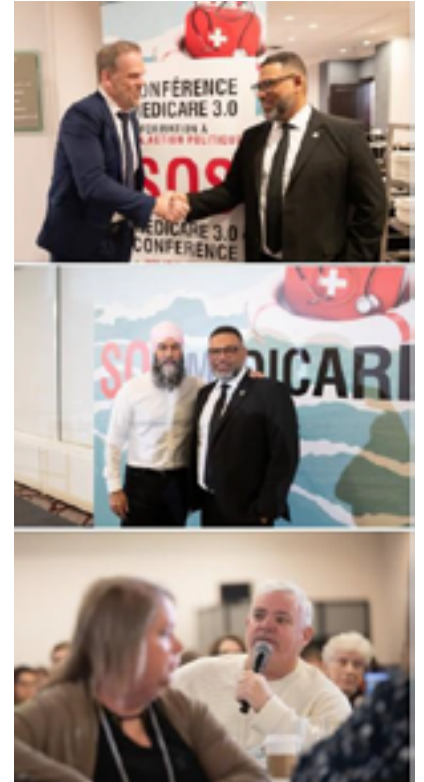
SOS Medicare 3.0

NUPGE was heavily involved in sponsoring SOS Medicare 3.0, as well as being on the steering committee. On February 24-25, 2025, over 200 people attended the SOS Medicare 3.0 Conference, which also included a political action training carried out by the Canadian Labour Congress.

There was a broad mix of health care workers, health care experts and advocates, union staffers and students from across the country. All provinces and territories were represented.

The event also brought in political speakers including Federal Health Minister Mark Holland, NDP federal leader Jagmeet Singh and Manitoba Health Minister Uzoma Asagwara. The media covered the event which can be deemed a success in raising the profile of health care issues in advance of the election writ being dropped.

NUPGE members were well represented and NUPGE hosted the opening reception for participants.



Trade Justice Network (TJN), and Trade and Investment Research Project (TIRP)

The National Union continues to work in solidarity with labour and civil society allies in ongoing meetings to share research and to promote collective action on the impact of global trade and investor rights agreements on our economic and democratic institutions. To this end, NUPGE is engaged with two coalitions: the Trade and Investment Research Project (TIRP) and the Trade Justice Network (TJN). The primary focus of TIRP is to share information and research, and the aim of the TJN is political advocacy and action.

The National Union's involvement in these important coalitions allows us to join forces with allies to defend the public interest against expanding corporate rights, power, and influence at the foundation of neoliberal market globalization.

The National Union has long held the view that these agreements remove public safeguards, threaten public safety, erode democracy, and undermine environmental laws and regulations. They also erode quality public services through specific mechanisms designed to lock in liberalization and privatization. In so doing, these agreements accelerate and entrench widening inequality of income and wealth.

In 2025, both coalitions raised awareness and provided critical intelligence about the campaign of economic and political intimidation against Canada and the world from the President of the United States, Donald Trump. Following his inauguration on January 20, 2025, Trump has threatened Canada's economy by imposing tariffs, in clear violation of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) — a free trade agreement he negotiated and signed in his first term in 2020, [and which he praised](#) as the “best agreement we’ve ever made” and which he lauded it for replacing the “nightmare” North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) ratified under former President Bill Clinton, calling it the “worst trade deal ever made.”

NUPGE on the Issues

The National Union ensures that the voices of 425,000 members across Canada led the way in pushing for progressive and innovative ideas.

Our work does not stop at the bargaining table—it extends into the communities where our members live, raise families, and experience the impacts of policy every day.

Inequality, poverty, and discrimination are rooted in economic structures. Unions have always fought for fair wages and safe work—but those fights are connected to broader struggles against injustice. Speaking out helps advance equity for everyone, especially marginalized communities.

Canada - Ecuador Free Trade Agreement

In 2025, the National Union continued to monitor and oppose the ongoing negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement with Mexico.

Once again, NUPGE took a leadership role on this issue by organizing a multi-union letter which was sent in March to outgoing Prime Minister Trudeau.

In addition to NUPGE, the letter was signed by the CLC President Bea Bruske along with presidents of four other unions representing more than three million public- and private-sector workers across the country: Canadian Association of Professional Employees (CAPE), United Steelworkers (USW), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), and Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC).

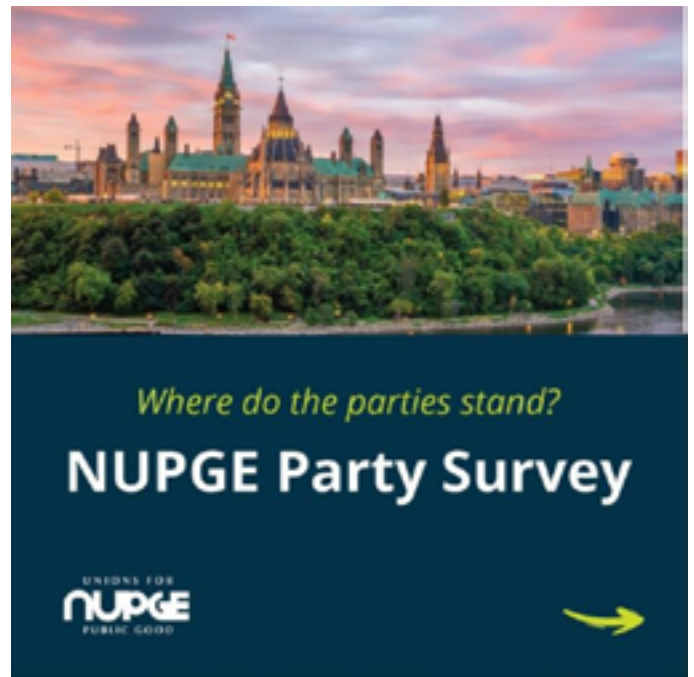
The letter reiterated our concerns raised in the previous letter sent in October 2024, particularly the lack of consultation with Indigenous groups, which is a violation of their rights under the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); and the troubling inclusion of the biased and unjust Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) system which Ecuador banned in 2008 and rejected it again in a 2024 popular referendum. The letter urged the government to reconsider this trade agreement and to prioritize the protection of human rights, environmental sustainability, and the rights of Indigenous peoples with a transparent and inclusive process that respects the voices and concerns of those most affected by harmful extractive practices.

Federal Election

During the 2025 federal election, the National Union produced fact sheets and report cards to give members a clear sense of where each party stood on issues of importance to members.

Issues addressed in the fact sheets and report cards included:

- Bodily Autonomy
- Climate Change
- Forest/Wildland Firefighters
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Post-secondary Education
- Protecting Democracy
- Tax Fairness
- Truth and Reconciliation and Justice for Indigenous Peoples



To give people accurate information about where parties really stand, both the fact sheets and report cards went beyond the spin provided by political parties. NUPGE fact sheets and report cards looked at what parties have actually done on issues and the specific proposals.

Materials were shared through NUPGE's website and social media accounts and with Components.

The National Union is non-partisan and does not endorse any political party. However, as Elections Canada can consider advocating for a particular position, such as supporting pharmacare, to be partisan, NUPGE registered as a third party to ensure it was not violating election finance laws.

Fairness for Forest/Wildland Firefighters

In 2025 the National Union continued the campaign to ensure that wildland firefighters (WFF) are treated as equal to other firefighters regarding protections and benefits, specifically pensionable earnings, and pension accrual. The inequality is rooted in the fact that they are not officially recognized as forest firefighters, and so they are excluded from the Public Safety Occupation provisions of the federal *Income Tax Act*. Since this problem falls under the constitutional authority of the Parliament of Canada, it is one the federal government can solve, and without legislation.

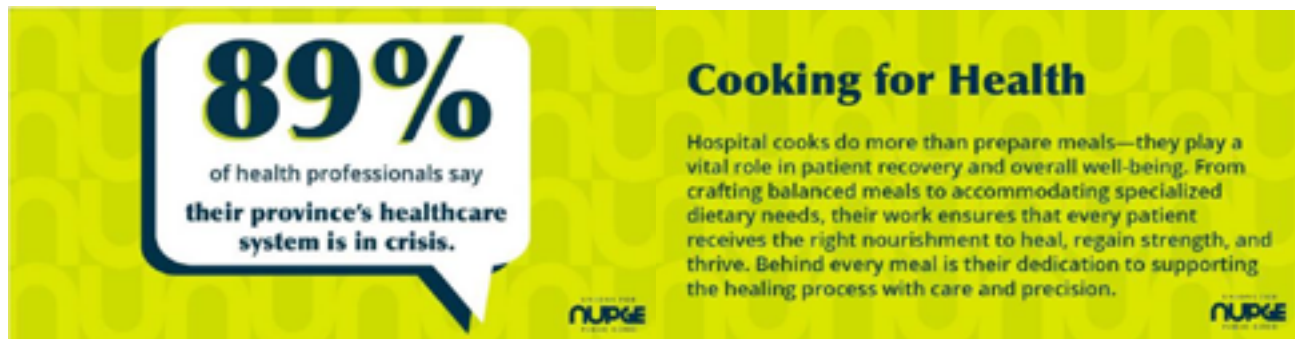
The most important way this exclusion can be corrected is by amending the definition of *firefighter* in the National Occupation Classification (NOC) to include forest firefighters. The campaign to fix this error was launched in 2024 involving a comprehensive government relations, lobbying, and

media strategy. The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness with as many people as possible who are responsible for amending the NOC.

In March 2025, the National Union sent a 3-page letter to Prime Minister Mark Carney, with copies to the leaders of other political parties as well as senior members of the bureaucracy. The letter reiterated our request to correct the unjustified exclusion of forest firefighters from the NOC, and reviewed the work done on this issue since early 2024.

In April 2025, the National Union sent a letter to senior members of the Ottawa bureaucracy responsible for the NOC with recommendations of proposed corrections to the classification system. The letter identified four sections of the NOC requiring specific amendments to ensure that the classification accurately reflects the work of wildland firefighters.

Healthcare Member Survey



In January 2025, the National Union released the findings of a new, nationwide survey, the first of its kind, revealing that approximately nine out of ten health professionals in communities across the country report the system is in crisis (89%). The survey, conducted by Abacus Data, reveals more than half of workers (55%) say the system is understaffed. Four out of five workers (80%) report that working short-staffed causes moderate or severe effects on their health. And more than half (61%) report that they are experiencing heavy workloads and burnout.

The survey also gives voice to the diverse workforce keeping our health care system functioning. These workers are often overlooked despite the valuable role they play.

NUPGE is committed to fighting for better conditions for all workers. Better conditions will directly contribute to better health care for all through Canada's public care system. Health professionals have shared experiences that show how urgent the situation is across the country. It's time for governments to act.

This is the first step in a 3-phase campaign to promote the work our healthcare members do, the challenges they face, and the solutions to the problems within our national system of care.

Income Inequality

Statistics Canada data shows income and wealth inequality are continuing to grow. Data released in October 2024 showed that the gap between the wealthy and low- and middle-income Canadians is at an all-time high.

Unfortunately, just as the growth in income and wealth inequality is like what we were seeing when NUPGE first started to talk about income inequality, so are the threats we are facing today. In 2010, small-c conservative governments were trying to implement austerity measures to pay for the 2007–2008 financial crisis, letting the financial sector and the others who received billions in bailouts off the hook. Now, we are being told that austerity measures are needed to pay for the government's COVID-19 response—and again those most able to pay will not be held accountable.

NUPGE and its Components are continuing to make fighting income inequality a priority. That work takes place at the bargaining table and in pushing for policies to reduce income inequality. Our research, public awareness campaigns, and lobbying initiatives continue to show the negative impacts income inequality has on people. We have fought for measures to fight income inequality, including expanded government services, tax fairness, and modern economic strategies.

As a result of the work NUPGE and others have done, people are aware of income and wealth inequality. The biggest challenge now is to convince people that there is more we can do about it. While there have been some gains for working people in Canada over the last nine years, the modest measures the federal government has implemented have not matched the extravagant claims government spokespeople have made. As a result of the gap between what has been done and those extravagant claims, many working people are wondering whether it is possible to do much to reduce income and wealth inequality.

Because of this situation in addition to showing that there is a problem, fighting income and wealth inequality means showing that there are workable solutions that will make a difference in people's lives, and that go far beyond what the current federal government has done. It is why NUPGE has called for action on issues ranging from cell phone costs to extending an increase in Old Age Security to all seniors. It is also why NUPGE is co-sponsoring the first Trade Union Tax Forum held in Canada.

The goal must be making sure that people know there is an alternative to austerity and that we do not have to accept high levels of income and wealth inequality.

International Solidarity

NUPGE is committed to international solidarity. NUPGE engaged in solidarity with workers and people around the world by speaking out against human rights violations, supporting humanitarian responses to crises, showing solidarity with workers and trade union movements around the world, and supporting migrant and refugee rights.

NUPGE continues its history of supporting the labour and social movements in Colombia. We have a longstanding relationship with the Colombian lawyers collective, Cajar. NUPGE also donates to international causes through the John Fryer Fund.

Our solidarity work also happens in Canada. NUPGE continued to support the migrant-led campaign for regularization and full and permanent immigration status for all. In 2024 and 2025 so far, we have been responding to the federal government's cap on international student permits and the impacts on the public post-secondary education sector.

Intimate Partner/Domestic Violence

The Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI) continues to highlight the need for better responses from all levels of governments to respond and protect those that are suffering from intimate partner/domestic violence. Despite the growing awareness of the effects of intimate partner/domestic violence, the violence continues to increase with rates in some provinces such as Nova Scotia increasing dramatically.

The ACWI is pleased that, due to pressure from unions, women's groups, and domestic violence groups, there is domestic violence leave in all provinces and territories. However, there is an immediate need for all levels of governments to respond with measures to protect women and their children to ensure that there is an appropriate and rapid response from authorities, especially from Indigenous or racialized communities. The ACWI continues to stress the need for better funding for shelters and transition houses, affordable housing, public services for those escaping violence and those perpetuating the violence. There is also the need for education within our school systems to reinforce that violence should never be used.

Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), Advisory Committee—National Action Plan on Mental Health and Criminal Justice

The MHCC is developing and implementing a National Action Plan (NAP) on mental health and criminal justice "to recognize and address the mental health needs of people who come into contact with the criminal justice system." This NAP is supposed to include those who work in the system, and those who face criminal justice.

Furthermore, it includes identifying the needs and considerations of priority populations (e.g., Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, and women) and working to mitigate the impacts of colonialism, racism, and other forms of oppression. To assist in the development and implementation of an NAP, the MHCC invited NUPGE to join with over 20 experts on a Development Advisory Committee to give strategic advice, opinion, feedback, and to provide expertise to MHCC and "ultimately co-create" the action plan. The national action plan will be released in 2025.

Pensions

The National Union's work on pensions continues to be focused on supporting the work of our Components' pension fund trustees and pension activists and addressing issues related to federal legislation and pensions. An in-person meeting of the Pensions Working Group is being planned for October 30 and 31, 2025 in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Because many people working on pension issues are also involved in issues around benefits, there will be a Benefits Working Group meeting on October 29, also in Winnipeg.

Work to update NUPGE Pensions Manual is ongoing. The first three modules were released in 2024, and more are being added this year.

Post-secondary Education

NUPGE is responding to the crisis in public post-secondary education (PSE) that has been exposed by the federal government's cap on international student permits and changes to the post-graduation work permit (PGWP) program.

Since federal and provincial governments have been underfunding public PSE over recent decades, colleges and universities have come to rely on international students, who are charged exorbitantly high fees. As a result, the federal government's immigration policy changes, which have caused significant drops in enrolment, have led to a crisis for many institutions. Colleges and universities have implemented hiring freezes and even layoffs, cut services, and suspended or eliminated programs, with colleges being hit the hardest.

In 2025, NUPGE launched a [campaign](#) that shines a line on this situation and calls on governments to act. This includes a campaign website, graphics, and social media posts and ads. We produced a backgrounder to support education on the issue and its real root cause: a decline in public funding for public PSE. And, through the campaign page, people can write to their MPs to call on the federal government to provide emergency funding for public PSE, make more public college programs available for the PGWP, ensure international students and graduates have a pathway to permanent status, and create a dedicated PSE funding transfer tied to national standards.

NUPGE also met with the CLC and other affiliates to discuss the issues that workers in public PSE are facing and gave input on the CLC response.



Privatization

Fighting privatization remains a priority for NUPGE because of the impact on our members and the public good. As those taking over privatized services try to increase profits, NUPGE members are forced to fight back against attempts to reduce wages, benefits and staffing levels. When the push to increase profits impacts the quality of public services, the community suffers.

Privatization also means higher costs and that also harms the public good. One way or another, the public pays those higher costs. The only question is whether it's through user fees, poorer quality as a result of under-funding, higher taxes or cuts in other areas.

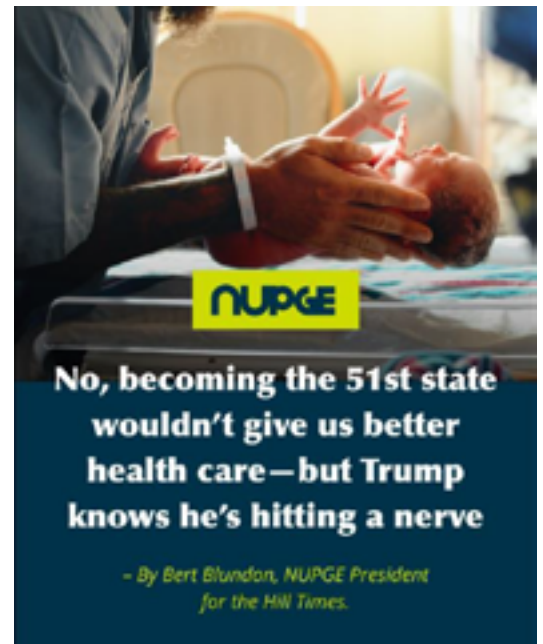
NUPGE's Anti-Privatization Working Group met by videoconference on March 18, 2025. There was extensive discussion of the scandals around the contracting out of surgeries in Alberta and the role that NUPGE Component Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA) played in bringing those scandals to light. There was also discussion of how artificial intelligence will be used in privatization and the weakness of the regulations for the federal beneficial ownership registry.

NUPGE is continuing to respond to provide materials drawing attention to the problems with privatization. This includes website stories on [the cost of privatizing liquor and cannabis retailing and distribution](#) and the potential danger posed by [poorly thought-out efforts to remove measures considered to be inter-provincial trade barriers](#).

Trump, Tariffs, and the End of Free Trade

Following his inauguration on January 20, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump launched an unprovoked, ill-informed, and alarming campaign of economic and political intimidation against Canada. With a rude and ungracious manner lacking any pretense of decorum and diplomacy, the President proclaimed a series of shocking, disrespectful, and deranged executive orders and public statements, unheard of in Canada's 158-year relationship with the U.S.

Trump repeatedly belittled and insulted Canada's Prime Minister, and he has openly mused about using "economic force" to annex Canada, as part of a broader imperial strategy of territorial expansion (potentially including Greenland, Panama, and Gaza). And if that's not enough, Trump has threatened Canada's economy by imposing tariffs, in clear violation of the free trade and investment agreement governing Mexico, Canada, and the United States known in Canada as the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA).



In response to this unprecedented and existential threat to Canada, NUPGE has been engaged in a series of actions to promote strategic and assertive responses to protect the economic interests of Canadian workers. We are working closely with our allies in the labour movement to develop and promote a response that protects the interests of workers and meeting regularly with like-minded civil society organizations to discuss strategies that protect vulnerable populations, and that address the climate emergency.

NUPGE is producing research to better inform members about all the strategies that can be adopted to preserve Canadian sovereignty, build resilience by strengthening the domestic economy and diversifying trading relationships, and to protect and support the economic interests of workers.

Union-Led Advisory Table

President Blundon represented NUPGE on the Union-Led Advisory Table (ULAT). Through ULAT, labour leaders provided advice to the federal government on how to support workers through disruptions in the labour market, like climate change, new technologies, and an aging workforce. The advisory table looked at training and skills development, retirement security, staffing shortages, and improving equity. ULAT was convened in late 2023, met throughout 2024, and produced its final report, [*Unions Power Prosperity: A Report from the Union-Led Advisory Table*](#), in February 2025. In developing the recommendations, NUPGE emphasized investing in public services as critical to withstanding labour market disruptions and transitioning to a more equitable and sustainable economy. Of particular importance to NUPGE are the recommendations on addressing the health human resources crisis, investing in public post-secondary education, and taking steps to strengthen equity and inclusion.

Valuing Care

The National Union continues to highlight the need for increased funding and policies for public care services. Ensuring that we have strong public care services not only helps Canadians but also is a powerful economic stimulus tool with economic and social benefits including job creation and increased GDP.

NUPGE Social Media

NUPGE continues to share most of our content on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. We have grown our following on social media spreading our messages on our healthcare member survey, the trade war, and fairness for forest firefighters. We amplify the voices of members through Components, and our allies.

As a union, we use our voice to highlight the issues we care about. We continue to celebrate and mark days of significance throughout the year. Our online posts allow us to share our perspective on certain events and promote issues for which we are fighting.



NUPGE Website



Unions for Public Good



Our website, nupge.ca, is a space for the National Union to celebrate our successes and add our particular voice on the issues of the day. Our posts provide shorter analysis on issues like privatization, Component bargaining victories, and the crisis in health care. We also host our research papers, campaigns, and calls to action on the site.

Statistics

From January 1 to April 30, 2025, nupge.ca had 26,330 visitors and a total of 53,748 pages views. Our ten most popular posts from January to April were as follows:

Table 1. Top ten posts on NUPGE.ca

Post	Views
National Union Scholarship winners for the 2024-2025 academic year	1271
Major Canadian company under fire for tax dodging	1021
International Day of Pink 2025	669
Pensioners no longer at the back of the line	570
Help fund your education with NUPGE Scholarships 2025-2026	386
Employment Insurance (EI) and Canada's Response to New US Tariffs	361
Class action lawsuit filed against government on behalf of Black Federal Public Service workers	311
Press Release: New data reveals Canadian health care system and workers in crisis	255
February is Black History Month	242
Where the Parties stand: NUPGE shares responses from federal parties on key issues	168

In the same time frame, our research reports on NUPGE.ca were viewed 926 times. The most popular ones are listed in the table below

Table 2. Top Research Reports on NUPGE.ca

Research report	Views
NUPGE Abacus Survey Results	582
NUPGE Abacus Detailed Report	125
Period Poverty in Canada	63
NUPGE Pension Manual	21
Federal Party Responses to NUPGE's questionnaires	17
The Cost of Being a Woman-The Pink Tax Phenomenon	15

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June 2025

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JASON MACLEAN, Secretary-Treasurer

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Keith Noseworthy

Yasemin Tanaçan-Blacklock

Michael Temelini

NUPGE Meetings

National Executive Board Meetings

NEB Meeting – February 11, 2025

NEB Meeting – March 3-5, 2025

Meetings of Committees and Working Groups

Ferry and Marine Workers Videoconference – January 9, 2025

Communications Officers Meeting – January 21 & 22, 2025

Special Workers with Disabilities Committee Videoconference – January 22, 2025

Special Pride Committee Videoconference – January 29, 2025

Advisory Committee on Women’s Issues (ACWI) Videoconference, February 6 & 7, 2025

Indigenous Issues Committee (IIC) Meeting – February 20 & 21, 2025

Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) Reception – February 24, 2025

Advisory Committee on Young Workers’ Issues (ACYWI) Videoconference – February 26, 2025

Wildland Firefighters Working Group Meeting – February 27 & 28, 2025

Ferry and Marine Workers Videoconference – March 9, 2025

Anti-Privatization Videoconference – March 18, 2025

Anti-Racism Committee (ARC) Videoconference – March 19, 2025

Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee (CBAC) Meeting – March 25 & 26, 2025

Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE) Videoconference – April 8, 2025

Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat (CHPS) Meeting – April 28 & 29, 2025

Component Liquor Board & Cannabis Working Group Videoconference – April 29, 2025

Publications and Submissions

- January [NUPGE Healthcare Member Survey](#)
- March [A Pivotal Moment for Post-secondary Education in Canada](#)
- March [Ballot Box Briefings](#)
- Bodily Autonomy
 - Climate Change
 - Forest/Wildland Firefighters
 - Health Care
 - Housing
 - Post-secondary Education
 - Protecting Democracy
 - Tax Fairness
 - Truth and Reconciliation and Justice for Indigenous Peoples

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CONVENTION 2025