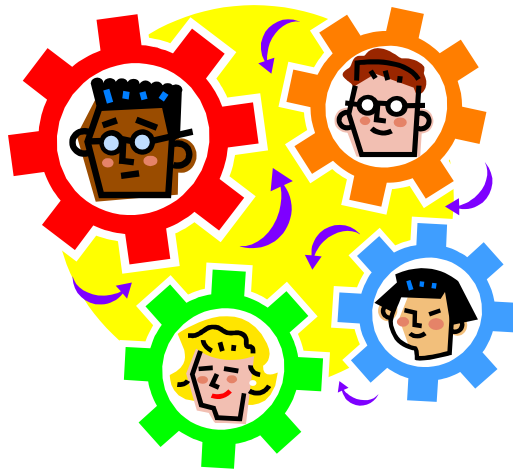


LOCAL UNION EXECUTIVE HANDBOOK



Revised March 2002
Ig/opeiu 491

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Local Union Executive Handbook

Introduction:

This handbook has been developed to give newly elected Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Secretary-Treasurers and Recording Secretaries an overview of the role and duties of their positions. Information from CUPE's National Constitution and model by-laws (revised January 1994) is included.

This handbook includes: Tips for each position; skills and knowledge required to be effective in the position; sources of advice and assistance; and relevant Union Development Department workshops for each position.

Role of a Local Union Executive:

The local union executive (President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary and Secretary-Treasurer) is responsible for the leadership and administration of the local. The "job" of all local union leaders is to advance the interests of the local union members. The best run locals are those that successfully advance the interests of their membership within a culture of problem solving.



Unions represent their members by negotiating collective agreements and by lobbying governments to improve laws that affect the membership. Unions also represent their members by ensuring that employers do not violate their collective agreements or laws (health and safety, human rights, etc.) that affect the members.

Unions are organizations where the members work together to solve problems. It is the job of the executive to coordinate these activities, and to ensure that the members have adequate information, advice and funds to deal effectively with workplace problems and concerns.

The local union executive finds its terms of reference in: the CUPE Constitution (Established by CUPE National Convention), local union by-laws (established by the local union subject to appendix "b" of the CUPE constitution) and Federal and Provincial Labour laws. The mandate is through the election process under the CUPE constitution and the local union by-laws.

PRESIDENT



Role of the President:

The President is the local's leader. The president is responsible for identifying problems affecting the members and proposing strategies for dealing with these problems.

In order to help the membership solve workplace problems, the President develops and implements plans to build solidarity and militancy.

To build militancy and solidarity, the President must ensure that the membership is informed about the activities of the local union, the settlements negotiated by other locals and the programs and campaigns of CUPE and the CLC.

The President must know how the members feel about issues to properly represent them. He or she must develop, justify and present concrete ways of dealing with the problems experienced by the membership when facing the employer.

The President is responsible for all of the activities undertaken by the local. This does not mean that the President must do all of the work. Effective Presidents delegate as much work as possible. Presidents should also encourage others to get involved, delegate tasks to those most likely to carry them out and see that each task is completed on time.

Thus, a major role of the President is to motivate executive board and committee members, stewards and the membership.

Duties of the President:

CUPE Constitution

B.III Duties of Officers

President

B.3.1

The President shall preside at all meetings of the Local Union; sign each order on the treasury only as authorized and ordered by the Local Union; appoint all committees not otherwise ordered; and transact such other business as may of right pertain to the office of President, and which may be necessary for the proper functioning of the Local Union.

Some suggestions taken from CUPE Model By-laws:

Duties of the President:

Membership Meetings:

- ◆ Chairs membership meetings
- ◆ Decides on questions of law and parliamentary procedure subject to appeal by the members
- ◆ Casts the deciding vote in the event of a tie
- ◆ Reports on his/her activities
- ◆ Sees that activities accepted by the membership have been carried out
- ◆ Promotes attendance at meetings by investigating why any group (women, visible minorities, anyone from a particular work site, etc.) is not attending

Executive Meetings:

- ◆ Leads discussions on future plans for local activities
- ◆ Leads discussions on executive recommendations for activities to be taken to the membership meetings for ratification
- ◆ Helps prepare the report of executive board activities
- ◆ Sees that all committee and executive board members' reports are ready for the membership meeting
- ◆ Assigns people to carry out tasks voted on by the membership and sets deadlines for their completion

Committees:

- ◆ Sits as ex-officio member of all committees
- ◆ Serves as spokesperson for the local (along with the CUPE National Representative during negotiations)

General Administration:

- ◆ Exercises general supervision over the affairs of the local
- ◆ Enforces CUPE's constitution and the local's by-laws
- ◆ Signs all cheques and all official documents
- ◆ Allocates work to other members of the executive, to committees and to members and sees that the assignments are carried out within the deadlines set by the executive
- ◆ Sees that CUPE policy and campaigns are carried out by the local
- ◆ Acts as the local's spokesperson at press conferences, newspaper interviews, etc.
- ◆ Recruits interested members for unfilled committee positions, stewards, delegates for affiliated groups, etc.

VICE-PRESIDENT



Role of the Vice-President:

The Vice-President is the President's Assistant. Vice-Presidents perform the duties of the President in the absence of the President. Vice-Presidents usually chair some committees. In addition, Vice-Presidents usually chair executive board meetings so that the President has more opportunity to take part in the meetings.

In addition to these standard duties, many locals have given Vice-Presidents responsibility for other important duties, for example, membership communications, union education, community outreach, equality issues, representing specific groups of members, etc.

Duties of the Vice-President:

CUPE Constitution:

B.3.2

The Vice-President shall perform the duties of the President in the absence of that officer, and, in case of the resignation or death of the President, shall perform the duties of the President until such vacancy is filled as provided in the Local Union Constitution. The Vice-President shall also preside when called upon by the President and at times when the President may be temporarily unable to discharge the duties of that office.

Some suggestions taken from the CUPE Model By-laws:

Duties of Vice-Presidents:

Membership Meetings

- ◆ Chair in the absence of the President

Executive Meetings

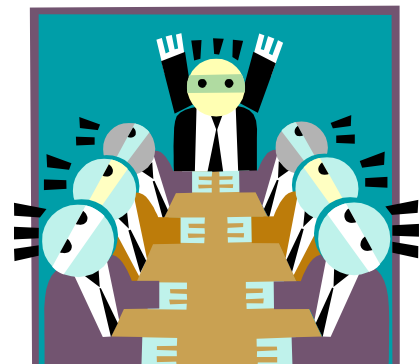
- ◆ Chairs the meeting

Committees

- ◆ Act on assigned committees

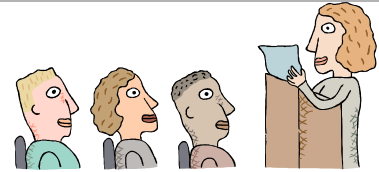
Union Administration

- ◆ Completes duties delegated by the President
- ◆ Assumes President's duties when the President is absent



Tips for Presidents and Vice-Presidents:

Chairing Meetings:



- ◆ If you have never chaired meetings before, or if you are uncertain about parliamentary procedure, take the “Public Speaking and Parliamentary Procedure” workshop offered by the CUPE Union Development Department. A CUPE publication “Tips for the Chairperson” is a good resource for those who are unfamiliar with the rules of order. This is available from your CUPE Union Development Representative.
- ◆ Please post or distribute an agenda before the meeting. Ensure that all committees are ready to report. Make sure that reports are short and to the point.
- ◆ Don’t get too involved in what is being discussed. It’s hard to chair and take part in the discussion at the same time. If you think that important points are being missed, hand the gavel to the Vice-President and “leave the chair” before you speak.
- ◆ View the criticism of the activities of the local union as an opportunity to ask what the local should be doing. Unless a proposal is outrageous, ask the presenter to make a motion proposing a solution to the problem that they raised. If the motion passes, ask the presenter to work on implementing his or her proposal. Finding volunteers to work on union activities is part of the President’s and Vice-President’s job. Vocal critics are a good place to start recruiting!

Union Administration:



- ◆ At each executive meeting, go through each item voted on and make sure that someone is assigned to carry out the motion and that a deadline is agreed to.
- ◆ Keep in touch with everyone who has agreed to do anything on behalf of the local to see how they are doing. Let them know that they will have to make regular reports on their activities.
- ◆ One of the biggest jobs is motivating members to get involved and to complete activities on time. Since almost everyone involved in union activities is a volunteer, you can’t threaten or humiliate people into doing anything. Use positive motivation and encouragement. Work done by a member on behalf of the local should be publicly recognized at membership meetings and in union publications.
- ◆ Check that expenses have been approved by the membership and that each expense is accompanied by an invoice or expense claim before signing any cheques. Never sign blank cheques or sign cheques made out to “cash” or to the Secretary-Treasurer.
- ◆ Make sure that each executive board member, committee chair and steward has a written “job description” listing the details of duties assigned to the position.

- ◆ Make sure that every new executive board member, committee chair and steward is sent for appropriate training as soon as possible after being elected or selected.
- ◆ Make a point of finding out why some members never come to union meetings. To be effective, the local union must represent all its members and it is important that all the members feel that the union is there for them.
- ◆ Make sure that the executive members, steward body and committee members reflect the diverse groups within the local union.

Communication:

- ◆ To lead effectively, the President and Vice-President must know what is going on in all parts of the workplace and what is happening to other locals in the area. This means making sure that there are regular meetings with stewards, that newspaper reports about the employer are kept, and that the local is affiliated to the CUPE district council, labour council, and provincial CUPE division.
- ◆ Information must be passed on to the membership on a regular basis at meetings and through bulletin board notices. Regular communication with the membership and an open attitude encouraging members' involvement in union activities are the keys to fighting apathy.

Some skills and knowledge required to be an effective President or Vice-President:

- ◆ CUPE's Constitution
- ◆ CUPE policy, procedures and structures
- ◆ Local By-laws
- ◆ The Collective Agreement
- ◆ Labour Laws
- ◆ Parliamentary Procedure and Rules of Order
- ◆ Public Speaking Skills
- ◆ Negotiating Skills
- ◆ Leadership Skills (how to get members involved, how to motivate people, etc.)
- ◆ Knowledge of the contract settlements in nearby locals, important disputes and campaigns supported by CUPE, the Federation of Labour and the Labour Council.

Sources of advice and assistance:

- ◆ Former Presidents and Vice-Presidents
- ◆ Presidents in other unions (meet them at the CUPE District Council or the Labour Council)
- ◆ Experienced members of your executive
- ◆ Your CUPE National Representative
- ◆ CUPE Union Development Department Workshops



Note: See list of some relevant Union Development Department workshops at the end of this handbook

RECORDING SECRETARY



Role of the Recording Secretary:

The Recording Secretary's job is vital in promoting the local union's goals of militancy and solidarity.

The Recording Secretary is responsible for record keeping and written communications.

It is the job of the Recording Secretary to keep the members informed about what activities the local union is doing to deal with problems. Keeping the members informed is the key to building interest and involvement of members in union activities.

Keeping and maintaining records of decisions taken by the local union and information such as letters to and from the employer and with other organizations are vital to the smooth and efficient running of the local union.

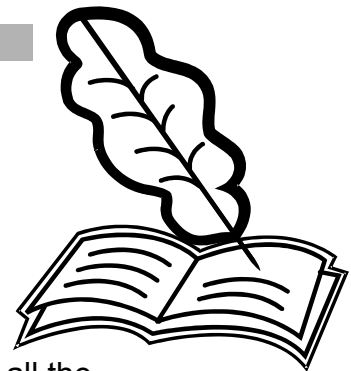
Duties of the Recording Secretary:

CUPE Constitution:

Recording Secretary:

B.3.3.

The Recording Secretary shall keep a correct, full and impartial record of the proceedings of each meeting of the local union and all the meetings of the Executive Board. Each record of proceedings shall include a copy of the full financial report presented by the Secretary-Treasurer in accordance with Article B.3.6. The Recording Secretary shall perform such other duties as the Local Union or Constitution may direct.



Some suggestions taken from the CUPE Model By-Laws:

Record Keeping:

- ◆ Takes minutes at Executive & Membership Meetings
- ◆ Maintains a policy log
- ◆ Maintains the local's files

Internal Communication:

- ◆ Prepares meeting notices & agendas for executive & membership meetings
- ◆ Circulates minutes of executive & membership meetings
- ◆ Receives, logs & distributes all incoming mail
- ◆ Develops & distributes a list of all correspondence received

- ◆ Reports on all important correspondence & leads discussion on business arising from correspondence at executive & membership meetings
- ◆ Maintains union bulletin boards
- ◆ Prepares bulletin board pamphlets promoting union activities & events
- ◆ Edits the local's newsletter or assists the newsletter committee

External Communication:

- ◆ Receives all communication from outside the local
- ◆ Responds to all correspondence
- ◆ Composes letters to the employer, CUPE National Office & other labour organizations, the media, & individual members of the local union.
- ◆ Forwards proposed contract settlements & collective agreements to CUPE National Office
- ◆ Orders all office supplies & equipment

Note: Recording Secretaries in CUPE locals don't always perform all of these duties. In some locals, other members of the executive are responsible for some of the tasks listed above.

Tips for Recording Secretaries:

Taking Minutes:

- ◆ The purpose of Minutes is to record decisions. There is usually no need to take word for word notes on the debate that leads to a decision.
- ◆ It is useful to note who will be responsible for carrying out each motion passed and when the task will be carried out.

Recording Secretary Reports to the Membership:

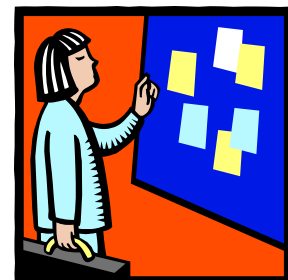
- ◆ To save time do not read each piece of correspondence but circulate a list of all correspondence and go over only those items that require a decision (such as a strike appeal) or the ones that are of interest to the members (such as details of an important contract settlement).

Meeting Notices and Agenda:

- ◆ Post Meeting Notices and Agenda on union bulletin boards at least a week before the date of the meeting.

Bulletin Board Pamphlets:

- ◆ Many members do not attend union meetings on a regular basis. To keep non-attending members informed, post one-page summaries of important contract



settlements, grievance decisions and union activities such as health and safety committee meetings, etc. on union bulletin boards.

Letter Writing:

- ◆ Start by listing the reasons you are writing the letter then list the points you want to make. Next turn each point into one or two short sentences.

Filing:

- ◆ Only file things that someone will need to refer to in the future and which will not be easily available somewhere else.
- ◆ Don't change an existing filing system unless people have trouble finding things.
- ◆ If you decide to change the system, consider filing things by subject by year. Some locals move the top file drawers down the cabinet at the end of each year and move the bottom drawer to the top after removing all but the most important files (meeting minutes, important grievances, contract settlements, invoices etc.) which are stored elsewhere.

Skills and knowledge required to be an effective recording secretary:

- ◆ Knowledge of how unions operate and what makes unions effective
- ◆ Ability to compose letters, bulletins, etc.
- ◆ Ability to take minutes at meetings
- ◆ Ability to organize files
- ◆ Ability to make verbal reports to the membership and the executive

Sources of Advice and Assistance:

- ◆ Former Recording Secretaries
- ◆ Recording Secretaries in other unions (meet them at the CUPE District Council or the Labour Council)
- ◆ Your CUPE National Representative
- ◆ CUPE Union Development Department workshops (Recording Secretaries, Communicating CUPE, etc.)



Note: See list of some relevant Union Development Department workshops at the end of this handbook.

SECRETARY- TREASURER



Role of Secretary-Treasurer:

The Secretary-Treasurer is responsible for the local union's money. This means that he or she is responsible for seeing that the amount of dues income is sufficient to carry out activities needed to advance the members' interests. They are also responsible for seeing that spending priorities reflect the local union's goals and that money is spent in accordance with the wishes of the membership. For these reasons, the position of the Secretary-Treasurer must be bonded at all times.

Secretary-Treasurers must also keep the members informed about the financial health of the local union and about how their money has been spent. Unless the members have confidence that their money is being spent according to their wishes, interest and support for the local union will dwindle.



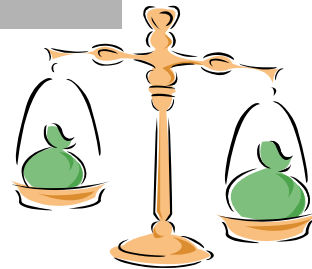
Without adequate funding, union locals cannot carry out the activities needed to represent the members. It is better to have an active local union with lots of membership involvement and activity with a small surplus in the bank than a passive local with little involvement but with a large surplus in the bank.

Duties of the Secretary-Treasurer:

CUPE Constitution:

Secretary-Treasurer

B.3.4



The Secretary-Treasurer shall be responsible for keeping all financial accounts of the Local Union and shall be responsible for maintaining correct and proper accounts of all its members. Maintenance of the financial accounts of the Local Union shall require that the Secretary-Treasurer, throughout his/her term, and on behalf of the local union membership, be responsible for maintaining, organizing, safe-guarding and keeping on file all supporting documents, authorizations, invoices, and/or vouchers for every disbursement made, receipts for all money sent to CUPE Headquarters, as well as records and supporting documents for all income received by the Local Union.

B.3.5

The Secretary-Treasurer, and all other Officers authorized to sign on behalf of the Local Union or other chartered organization, shall be properly bonded with a faithful performance of duty bond. Bonding amounts shall conform to the minimum guidelines as established by the National Secretary-Treasurer and distributed to all chartered organizations annually. The amount of bonding for any position shall be approved by the National Secretary-Treasurer in accordance with Article 9.3(k)

B.3.6

The Secretary-Treasurer shall regularly make a full financial report to meetings of the Local's Executive Board, as well as a written financial report to each regular membership meeting, detailing all income and expenditures for the period. It shall be the duty of the Secretary-Treasurer to keep on file all receipts for money sent to the Canadian Union of Public Employees Headquarters during the year.



B.3.7

The Secretary-Treasurer shall submit the Local's books and records to the Trustees for audit at least once each calendar year, and in addition to providing all books, records, invoices, other supporting documents, and original bank statements, must also furnish the Trustees with a letter from the bank(s) where the funds of the Local Union are deposited, attesting to the amount to the credit of the Local Union at such bank(s). The Secretary-Treasurer must, within a reasonable time, respond in writing to any recommendations and concerns raised by the Trustees in accordance with Article B.3.12.

B.3.8

The Secretary-Treasurer shall forward to the National Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, on the official monthly report forms provided, not later than the last day of each month, all financial obligations for the previous month owing to the Canadian Union of Public Employees. The Secretary-Treasurer shall forward one dollar (\$1.00) of each initiation fee on all members admitted (except for those named on the list forwarded with the application for a charter) along with the per capita tax on all dues received by the Local Union. The report should also set out the number of those initiated, reinstated, suspended and expelled and the number of members on whom per capita is being paid.

B.3.9



At the end of his/her term of office, the Secretary-Treasurer shall turn over to his/her successor, all properties and assets, including funds, books and records belonging to the Local Union. Any Secretary-Treasurer who cannot qualify for a bond shall immediately be disqualified from office and the Local Union shall proceed with the election of another Secretary-Treasurer.

Some suggestions taken from CUPE Model by-laws:

Income and Deposits:

- ◆ Maintains records of the size of the bargaining unit and the regular monthly wages paid to the bargaining unit.
- ◆ Receives and deposits all initiation fees, dues and assessments.
- ◆ Writes receipts for all cash received.
- ◆ Records all income transactions in the local union's CUPE ledger book.

Expenses:

- ◆ Makes all disbursements by cheque.
- ◆ Receives a receipt or expense voucher for all disbursements.
- ◆ Ensures that all cheques are signed by two signing officers, that all cheque stubs are completed, and that cheques are pre-numbered.
- ◆ Records all transactions.
- ◆ Prepares per capita tax forms.
- ◆ Receives membership approval for all non-routine expenditures.

Financial Records:

- ◆ Records all transactions in the CUPE ledger.
- ◆ Presents a monthly written Financial Report to the membership and to each executive meeting.
- ◆ Completes a monthly bank reconciliation.
- ◆ Completes a statement of Income & Expenses Form every six months.
- ◆ Maintains a receipt book for all cash transactions; records all payments on cheque stubs & keeps copies of all vouchers received from members.
- ◆ Keeps a copy of all minutes of Executive and Membership meetings where financial payments were authorized.
- ◆ Maintains membership records & signs membership cards.
- ◆ Files all expense vouchers, invoices, receipts.



Financial Advisor:

- ◆ Prepares cost estimates of contemplated new expenditures.
- ◆ Develops a budget for projected income and expenditures.
- ◆ Calculates a dues rate needed to provide income to cover projected expenditures.
- ◆ Advises executive and membership on the costs of proposed activities.



Tips for Secretary-Treasurers:

Bookkeeping:

- ◆ CUPE has a complete set of forms, (Ledger, Monthly (Treasurer's Report) and Bank Reconciliation Forms) available. These forms are specifically designed for local unions and should be used by all locals except those large locals with a computerized bookkeeping system.
- ◆ CUPE has also produced a complete manual on how to do all of the duties of the Secretary-Treasurer and Trustee. The manual is called "The Financial Officers Handbook". Both the handbook and the bookkeeping forms are available from your CUPE National Representative.
- ◆ CUPE has also developed a workshop specifically for Secretary-Treasurers. The "Financial Officers Workshop" is useful for all newly elected Secretary-Treasurers even if they already possess the knowledge to complete the bookkeeping forms.



Reports:

- ◆ Distribute a copy of the monthly Treasurer's Report to the membership.
- ◆ Make a short verbal report on the financial health of the local, noting major expenditures, and the bank balance at the beginning and the end of the month. Be prepared to answer questions on all expenditures.

Budgets:

- ◆ Treasurers should prepare a yearly budget. The discussion about the budget should center on what the local union will need to do to be more effective. These plans for new activities should then be costed along with estimates of the costs of ongoing activities. The resulting budget should be presented to the membership for approval. The budgeting process gives the executive an opportunity to assess the work that they have been doing to start to plan for the future rather than react to events and crisis as they happen.



Dues:

- ◆ The Secretary-Treasurer should see that there is enough income so the local union has the resources to represent the members. If income is insufficient to cover the costs of planned union activities, the Secretary-Treasurer must prepare a report to the membership explaining in detail that a dues increase is necessary and what any new money raised will be spent on.

Note: Any change to the dues structure calls for an amendment to the union's by-laws and must be submitted with proper notice to the membership. Any change to the by-laws must be submitted for approval to the National President's office.

Skills and Knowledge Required to be an Effective Secretary-Treasurer:

- ◆ CUPE's Constitution
- ◆ Local Union By-laws
- ◆ Bookkeeping skills
- ◆ CUPE financial procedures
- ◆ Ability to make verbal and written reports to the membership

Sources of Advice and Assistance:

- ◆ Former Secretary-Treasurers
- ◆ Treasurers in other unions (meet them at the CUPE District Council or the Labour Council)
- ◆ Experienced members of your executive
- ◆ Your CUPE National Representative
- ◆ CUPE National Accounting Department
- ◆ CUPE Union Development Department Workshops
- ◆ Per Capita Tax payment hot line 1-800-363-CUPE (2873)
Note: Use this number for any questions about bookkeeping.



Note: See list of some relevant Union Development Department workshops at the end of this handbook.

Relevant Union Development Department Workshops





Some Relevant Union Development Department Workshops for the Union President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary and Secretary-Treasurer:

- ◆ “Introduction to CUPE”
A short workshop for the new executive and committee members introducing them to CUPE and to effective union administration.
- ◆ “Our Union”
A more detailed workshop that includes the roles of members of a Local Union executive and committees and on the skills needed to be effective.
- ◆ “Face to Face Communication”
A workshop on how to communicate effectively. Useful for anyone who would like to have more effective listening and communication skills.
- ◆ “Public Speaking and Parliamentary Procedure”
Useful for anyone who is unfamiliar with meeting procedures or who feels uncomfortable speaking in front of groups.
- ◆ “Assertiveness Training”
A workshop on how to present your ideas and proposals in a straightforward manner and how to deal with other people’s ideas and criticisms.
- ◆ “Resolving Conflict”
A workshop dealing with methods to resolve conflict.
- ◆ “Cross Cultural/Combatting Racism”
Two workshops which allow the participants to learn about and value the diversity in our membership.
- ◆ “Pride in CUPE”
This workshop deals with the issues of workplace inequities for lesbian, gay men, bisexual and transgender members and their families.
- ◆ “Harassment Awareness”
The object of the harassment workshop is to discuss issues surrounding harassment in the workplace.
- ◆ “Union Leadership”
This workshop gives the participants the tools they need to carry out their duties as executive members, communicate with the membership and develop strategies to reflect the diversity within the membership.



Of special interest to the Recording Secretary:

- ◆ “Recording Secretary”
Workshop for recording secretaries.
- ◆ “Communicating CUPE”
All you need to learn about how to reach the membership and the public.



Of special interest to the Secretary-Treasurer:

- ◆ “Financial Officers”
This workshop is specifically developed for Secretary-Treasurers and Trustees of CUPE locals. All newly elected Financial Officers should take this workshop even if they already have a knowledge of bookkeeping. The workshop covers all aspects of the duties of Secretary-Treasurer.

Contact your CUPE Union Development Department Representative for more information about these and other workshops offered by the CUPE Union Development Department.