



# **ACTION PLAN**

# **2020**

## Summary

1. The 2020 Action Plan comes at a time when there is great political and economic instability. We would usually construct an action plan with a number of actions, which would be debated and amended at Convention. This is not an option this year. This plan was developed by the CUPE Ontario Action Plan Committee and approved by the CUPE Ontario Executive Board. This crisis is also an opportunity to transform and improve our society. As such, this year's Action Plan focuses on three themes: relief, recovery, and reimagining. This plan is for all workers, including those who are most marginalized: precarious workers, part time workers, young workers, migrant workers, and equity-seeking workers. We cannot leave any worker behind.

## 2020 Action Plan

2. The 2020 Action Plan reflects the current political climate due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, there is a need for real and tangible supports for workers and all Ontarians. But while responding to this crisis, we know that we also need a broader vision for Ontario that helps us recover from this pandemic and builds a stronger, more inclusive province.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the flaws within our failed system. Decades of prioritizing profits over people left our health care system and other public services weakened before this crisis. The result of this weakened system has been catastrophic. Workers' safety is jeopardized. The lives of Ontarians have been lost and threatened. Services across the public sector are extremely under-resourced and either shuttered to those who most need them or operating at maximum capacity close to the verge of collapse. Yet our government's response has been dangerously inadequate for our communities in need.
4. The system has failed us all. But the crisis has also amplified the disproportionate impacts felt by equity-seekers. Black, Chinese, racialized and Indigenous people, people with disabilities, women, people who are LGBTQ2S, and young people have felt the brunt of this crisis. The inequities in the experiences of people who are marginalized have been magnified and must change the way we fight back. Their experiences must be centred in the recovery process. We also understand that the experiences of workers include their experiences outside of the workplace. We need liberation for the working class. We need to unite to fight against white supremacy<sup>1</sup> and the rising tide of hate.

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<sup>1</sup> White supremacy is a set of ideas and practices that structure society to the benefit of white people and confirm their superiority. It maintains racial hierarchies and is a central organizing feature of modern human life. It serves to keep whiteness in the continued position of wealth, power and privilege. This system also positions Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) as worthy based on their proximity to whiteness.

5. Public consciousness has been raised about working-class issues and the critical role of a healthy public sector. Now, we must use this as an opportunity for real change, organizing, educating and mobilizing our communities to change our systems for the better. We must expand our movement to include all who have been impacted by COVID-19 and decades of neoliberalism<sup>2</sup>. The political right is already mobilizing around the deficit and arguing that we must return to austerity<sup>3</sup>. They will use this crisis to try to further dismantle the public sector. We must marshal our resources and counter this push. We know that we need to protect, strengthen and expand public services.
6. Now is a time that is ripe for transformational change; in fact, over 70% of Canadians think that is what we will see<sup>4</sup>. But we need the right kind of transformation, focused on people, not profits. We need investments in communities, not cuts. The working class has felt the brunt of this pandemic, and the recovery must now put us first. We cannot repeat the financial crisis of 2008 where the recovery was for the one percent. This pandemic has shown us that government can act swiftly for the good of Ontarians. We must join forces with others to demand that the government use its power to move us forward and create a better Ontario.

### **Relief**

7. Ontarians are struggling right now. Unemployment is at a record high, families are struggling to balance education and child care, and the health and safety of workers is at risk. We need to provide relief to Ontarians through direct support and legislative changes.

CUPE Ontario will:

8. Advocate for immediate support to Ontarians in need, including a \$2000 Ontario Emergency Income Benefit. This benefit must be accessible to all in Ontario, including those who work precariously, migrant workers, and all Ontarians in need.
9. Campaign to demand that the government properly recognizes and respects the value of care work, work that is primarily done by women, including Black and racialized women. As part of this, we will demand that care work be well compensated, increasing the wages of our most precarious workers.

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<sup>2</sup> Neoliberalism is a form of capitalism in which the state deregulates the economy, destroys unions, decreases taxes on the rich and corporations, and defunds public goods, all while repressing and policing the poor, particularly Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).

<sup>3</sup> Austerity is a policy of reducing government spending by cutting public services such as health care, education, and other social assistance.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ekospolitics.com/index.php/2020/05/a-future-history-of-the-covid-19-crisis/>

10. Demand the equalization of wages at the highest rate for workers doing the same job in the same sector.
11. Campaign to guarantee wage continuity for all public sector workers.
12. Call for the public release of comprehensive collection of COVID-19 demographic data, including race-based data, including data on testing, infections, and deaths.
13. Push for the government to immediately implement legislated care standards in long-term care.
14. Lobby government to mandate industry to produce personal protective equipment (PPE) that workers require, including N95 masks and to produce other essential goods for the health, safety and well-being of all Ontarians.
15. Demand a proper inventory of and access to personal protective equipment for all workers.
16. Lobby the government to prioritize the health and safety of workers and the public before reopening the economy.
17. Demand that the government fully incorporate workers in all discussions about and decision-making related to reopening the economy.
18. Ensure the government immediately repeals Bill 124<sup>5</sup> and Bill 47<sup>6</sup>, removing all restrictions on free and fair collective bargaining.
19. Demand immediate relief funding to allow for the continuation of public service delivery, including maintaining levels of service, providing resources to adjust to the new reality due to COVID-19, and reinstating workers who lost their jobs due to this crisis.
20. Increase the number of health and safety inspections and inspectors, and educate workers on their right to refuse unsafe work.

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<sup>5</sup> *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019* (Bill 124) imposed a series of 3-year “moderation periods” – in the form of salary and compensation caps – on a variety of public sector unionized and non-unionized workplaces.

<sup>6</sup> *The Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018* (Bill 47) removed almost all the positive labour law changes the previous government introduced.

21. Insist that the government's relief to business not be provided to those who use tax avoidance practices, tax evasion, or use tax havens. We will underscore that relief must be tied to accountability and transparency measures. Any business relief must be tied to strong environmental benchmarks, and maintaining and creating jobs.
22. Call out racism throughout this pandemic, including highlighting the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on equity-seekers and calling out the targeting of Black, racialized, and Indigenous people by police. We will call for immediate increased funding to the Anti-Racism Directorate.
23. Work with our coalition partners to lobby for enhanced funding for shelters supporting women and non-binary folks experiencing homelessness and leaving situations of abuse, and the development of mobile crisis response teams to respond to cases of sexual violence.

### **Recovery**

24. This pandemic has shown that, despite the government's protests, Ontario does have funds to support people in need. We can afford to take care of one another. We must reject a return to austerity. To help our province grow, we'll need investments in our communities, in public services, and in Ontarians. We need corporations and the rich who have been skating by to pay their fair share. We need to find new ways to organize to force the government to support a working-class agenda.

CUPE Ontario will:

25. Create a tax campaign which focuses on fair and progressive tax policies, and substantially increases tax revenue from corporations and the wealthy.
26. Campaign with our coalition partners to raise the rates for income assistance and supports for Ontarians, including the Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works for all Ontarians in need.
27. Lobby the government to ensure no one loses their accommodations during the economic recovery period, even after the State of Emergency has ended.
28. Apply pressure to overhaul:
  - a. Labour law to reduce precarity and to remove exclusions in the Employment Standards Act and Labour Relations Act and allow for increased unionization.
  - b. Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to enhance coverage and increase premiums, and include legislation for presumptive coverage for all cases of COVID-19 and similar illnesses contracted by frontline workers.

- c. Health and safety to increase PPE supply and support, strengthen enforcement, and bolster the right to refuse unsafe work.
29. Work with our allies to enshrine a living wage and paid sick days for all workers.
30. Highlight the importance of skilled trades in our recovery and broader access to education and retraining.
31. Reaffirm our solidarity pacts between locals, sectors, and bargaining councils and our commitment to no concessions bargaining.
32. Insist that all levels of government develop comprehensive pandemic plans.
33. Work with CUPE National to develop and distribute model bargaining language regarding pandemics.
34. Promote the importance of public sector jobs as green jobs.
35. Work with bargaining councils and sectors to strengthen health and safety committees at every local, including ensuring each local health and safety committee has certified members.
36. Develop and distribute material to our membership highlighting all their rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, including the right to refuse unsafe work.
37. Work with Union Education to deploy modules for health and safety, including pandemic planning, how to safely reopen, proper use of PPE, mental health first aid, and a module that addresses racism as a health and safety issue.
38. Continue our internal anti-racism work using our Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan (AROAP) as a framework.
39. Work with our allies and members to fight white supremacy and anti-Black racism in our workplaces and communities.
40. Work with our allies to lobby for increased resources to anti-racist community organizations.
41. Strengthen our networks within CUPE and with other allies to prepare for the coming wave of public sector austerity. We will shore up support for and develop unified messaging for a coordinated public response.

42. As the broader economy re-opens, we will work to ensure that this includes the building blocks for a zero-carbon economy and a just transition.
43. Insist that government provide mental health supports to workers in need, recognizing the intersectional impacts of racism and discrimination on mental health.
44. Campaign comprehensively to insist that the recovery does not leave anyone behind.

### **Reimagining**

45. The status quo is not working. It was not working before COVID-19, and its flaws have been clearly exposed. Now is that time to make the significant change that politicians tell us is impossible. It is not only possible, but it is necessary.

CUPE Ontario will:

46. Find new ways to engage our members, including online and electronic tools. This will ensure that more voices are heard from all geographical areas of the province, and create a stronger and more engaged membership.
47. Support the efforts of CUPE National to lobby for the creation of federal programs to support universal access to pharmacare and dental care, and nationalize long-term care, home care, and child care. Nationalizing would mean public, not-for profit delivery. It would eliminate the ability to create profit in these industries.
48. Campaign and lobby the provincial government for programs to support universal access to pharmacare and dental care, and nationalize long-term care, home, care, and child care, provincial coordination of medical supply purchases, and broadening provincial health care coverage to include all in the province, including extended care services.
49. Lobby for comprehensive access to mental health supports, comprehensive training and mental health first aid for all workers. CUPE Ontario will also lobby for better supports for those experiencing a mental health crisis, including the creation of mobile mental health crisis response teams, and other supports through phone lines and texting lines. There must also be mental health support for all to help prevent mental health crises and to support those after the moment of crisis. These measures must all be publicly-funded and publicly-delivered.
50. Campaign for comprehensive public supports for those who have experienced sexual violence at work and in the community. These supports will include solutions that do not involve the police and full access to resources to support recovery.

51. Push for legislation to ensure that all work is decent work, including a living wage, full time work, paid sick days, and support for equity-seekers.
52. Ensure that all people in Ontario who want to and are able to work can access employment. The government must also create good jobs and cannot rely solely on the private sector.
53. Ensure that all who want to access education, including post-secondary education, can do so without barriers, including free tuition for all students.
54. Ensure that all workers (including part time, full time, precarious, migrant, and equity-seeking workers) can access a workplace pension.
55. Campaign to defend defined benefit pension plans and strengthen true joint governance to enhance workers' control over their deferred wages.
56. Continue to advance an agenda of equity across CUPE and in our workplaces and communities. This will require us to centre the needs of the most marginalized in all that we do.
57. Fight to make sure people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of our society.
58. Show solidarity with other struggles throughout the world by educating our members on the situation faced by workers in other countries and making connections between our lives and the work of others abroad.
59. Continue to push for strong health and safety practices at all workplaces so that every worker can return home each day safely.
60. Lobby government to develop, support, and resource a climate action plan that focuses on green jobs and the reduction of carbon emissions, with clear mandates for industry.
61. Work with our allies to advance an agenda of environmental justice ensuring that we do not repeat the history of racism and white supremacy in the environmental movement.