

Ontario's Representation and Decision Making at the National Level

The Struggle for Fairness and Respect

Some facts:

- ➡ In Ontario we have over 40% of the Membership of CUPE across the country.
- ➡ Ontario has 4 seats on the CUPE National Executive Board – one General Vice-President and three Regional Vice-Presidents.
- ➡ This represents 17% of overall seats on the National Executive Board.

What is the issue between CUPE Ontario and CUPE National?

Ontario has close to half of the total membership of CUPE, yet decisions are taken at the National level with which we disagree. This is a problem for the entire union. CUPE's history has always been to try to reach consensus on important matters at the National level. This ensured that larger regions like Quebec, B.C. and Ontario never felt left out or voted against by other parts of the country.

CUPE National has changed its way of operating. No longer focused on building consensus, the National Executive Board is more about votes alone. This must change. Ontario, with close to half the membership across Canada, can be easily outvoted, even when those representing us around the table disagree. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and PEI have combined membership of 38,067 compared to Ontario's 220,000 and they have 4 seats. Saskatchewan and the Maritimes together have 5 National Executive Board seats with a membership of only 64,551.

Ontario's representation on the National Executive Board just doesn't make sense from a numbers perspective – over 40% of the members and only 17% of the votes – but it has become a more glaring problem because consensual decision making is also no longer being used by our National Union. Fairness demands this situation be addressed.

What is the solution?

We cannot change the Constitution or structure of the union now – that can only be done at a National Convention. Regardless, these issues cannot be left unaddressed over the next two years.

We need a commitment from CUPE National that they will return to what had been done for many years – use a model of consensus decision making that would ensure that, on matters of substance, a region like ours is not left out. When the largest region of the country disagrees with any matter, this is a problem for all regions. Gaining Ontario's agreement on any issue is key to the union moving forward in a united way.

We need recognition that it is no longer OK to have the largest region in the National Union off-side on decisions around key issues like the strike fund. Ontario's membership, issues and concerns need to be recognized and dealt with by CUPE National.

We need a commitment from CUPE National to take a serious look at representation on the National Executive Board. 17% of the votes just won't cut it for a region with close to have the membership. Options need to be explored, some used by other unions, not just adding seats but possibly waited voting and other ways to make the representation more fair for Ontario members.