



LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

— *official report* —



BACKGROUND

On October 24, just days after the 2015 federal election, CAPE leaders and activists gathered in Cantley, Quebec to develop strategies to reposition our union in light of the new political reality.

The key objective was to brainstorm ways to strengthen our locals and reinvent CAPE from the ground up. CAPE members from coast to coast who took part in the summit became our very own think-tank!

The day started with a discussion about what CAPE could come to expect under a Trudeau government – how the new political reality would impact our relationship with the employer, our approach at the bargaining table and our capacity, as local leaders, to effect positive change in the workplace.

Later, our attention turned inwards: members were asked to examine the National Executive Committee's strategic goals and provide feedback. With these goals in mind, members were asked to identify themes: areas where we should concentrate our efforts.

This was followed by a breakout session where members worked together to craft a strategic plan for their chosen area of focus. Working together, our members were able to come up with concrete actions that will forge a better future for our union.

A MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

With the fall of the Harper government, we can only hope that our work environment will once again be a space where decisions are made on the basis of sound evidence and where fearless advice is welcome. The government has already expressed its desire to get back to a model where ministers have more power and flexibility; ministers will be encouraged to listen to the public service.

But these nine years of conservative rule have done great damage to the public service and weakened unions. Perhaps a Liberal government will fix all that ails us, but that's unlikely. This party has a history of campaigning to the left and subsequently swinging right when it comes time to rule. Because we're dealing with a majority government, it'll be up to us to be the watchdogs of government.

Our role will be to keep their feet to the fire.

The Trudeau government has committed itself to repealing anti-union laws; specifically, C-377, which imposed heavy administrative burdens on union and C-525, which made it harder to unionize while making it easier to decertify existing unions in the workplace.

These laws were a serious threat to our ability to continue protecting our members' interests. We look forward to their repeal.

“I think it's likely that we'll be allowed to commit sociology in both official languages once again.”

- Emmanuelle Tremblay

But this government hasn't been as clear about the anti-union clauses that were slipped in recent budget bills including C-4 and C-59. There's been no clear indication about the government's willingness to once again allow us access to binding arbitration or about ensuring that essential position designations could again be negotiated. Unless we apply pressure, our rights and the necessary balance of power in the bargaining process are unlikely to be returned to us.



A NEW POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Overall, participants agreed that the change in government doesn't mean we can abandon the path we've been following. We need to continue working in collaboration with other federal-sector unions and mobilize in the workplace. There's a risk that, post-election, our members might become complacent. It's important for them to know that we can't always count on elections saving the day; that's why we need to focus on building our collective capacity. Especially while arbitration remains off the table, it's imperative that we build our capacity to mobilize our members in the event of a strike.

With a friendlier government in place, this is an opportune time to recruit new volunteers who, during the Harper era, might have been afraid of being seen engaging in union activities. Successful unions have active Locals because they foster one-on-one interactions; they touch base with members and are visible in the workplace. To that end, CAPE will need to invest in local training and mobilization.

The change in government also commands us to survey the membership once again, since the

dynamic at the bargaining table will invariably change. We'll need to fight to get back what we lost and consolidate our gains to protect them from future hostile governments. As mentioned earlier, it'll be up to us to keep the government's feet to the fire to return our right to access binding arbitration.

“There's a 'Harper hangover' out there: some managers have gotten engrained in this modus operandi. It's going to take some time for some things to change.”

- Participant

In terms of protecting the integrity of our work, we'll need to solidify the laws governing the role of the public service; to protect fearless advice over our loyalty to the minister, possibly even by adding this as a proposal at the bargaining table, along the same line as PIPSC with their 'scientific integrity' clause.

GOALS

During the leadership summit, participants were able to review and opine on the 2015-2018 strategic objectives identified by the national executive committee.

Through discussion, members helped us finesse our goals to the following:



CAPE members have the information and opportunity to engage in and shape the union.

CAPE and its membership are respected and effective members of the labour and social justice movement.



Members, locals and professional staff work together to improve and defend the everyday working conditions of CAPE members.

CAPE is positioned to successfully defend and improve the working conditions of its members for the next round of bargaining



The EC participants expressed their desire to see CAPE promote a fair and sustainable economy as part of its role in the social justice movement. In addition, many members agreed that CAPE ought to become more visible and take a leading role in shaping dialogue at the bargaining table, rather than following in the footsteps of other unions. Finally, it goes without saying that CAPE's role is to defend every aspect of our members' benefits and working conditions, many of which extend beyond the collective agreement.

Later, participants were asked to identify key areas of focus. A breakout session followed where members worked together, through the afternoon to create a strategic plan for their priority area.

STRATEGIC PLANS



1. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Desired outcome: Collective bargaining needs to be a timely, inclusive and democratic process.

To this end, the group recommends the following:

- Ensure that all voices are represented and establish a mechanism to ensure that minority interests are defended.
- Deal with group-specific issues.
- Construct a bargaining survey with open-ended questions.
- Build trust in the bargaining team by establishing check-points.
- Position CAPE as a leader instead of waiting for other unions' gains.
- Require a second check-in whenever the mandate is altered – a reset button, of sorts.
- Build-in accountability; have the bargaining team elected by members.
- Clearly outline the roles of the bargaining team and negotiator.

Strategic considerations raised in plenary:

- Determine who makes the call: bargaining team, leaders, members, President?
- Determine how to ensure group-specific issues aren't glossed over.
- Decisions at the bargaining table shouldn't sell-out newer employees.
- Ensure there's ongoing communications during bargaining.
- In the short term, we should request the repeal of C-4 and C-59 before going back to the bargaining table (consider obtaining a written commitment from the employer not to use these powers).

2. INFORM, ENGAGE AND MOBILIZE MEMBERS

Desired outcome: We need to create spaces where activists can meet, share and grow.

To this end, the group recommends the following:

- Create regional hubs, where local leaders can meet other local leaders and activists.
- Refine communications; clearly identify calls-to-action
- Establish phone trees
- Focus on signing-up rands; CAPE should develop materials to this end
- Reach out to term employees
- Promote inter-union activities; these enable local leaders to make valuable connections with their counterparts in other unions

Strategic considerations raised in plenary:

- Under this new government, we will likely have an easier time erecting information tables in government buildings; expect many more Rand campaigns
- We also need materials geared to new employees

STRATEGIC PLANS



3. DEFENSE AND STRIKE FUND

Desired outcome: CAPE's defense and strike fund must be adequate to defend the rights of its members.

To this end, the group recommends the following:

- Develop terms of reference for the fund.
- Consult members.
- Consider a dues increase to make the fund viable and sustainable: either as percentage or as a flat fee, as a temporary levy or continuous portion of dues.
- Conduct town halls to inform and consult members.
- Provide information on strike/defense funds from other unions, so members can make informed decisions.
- Organize a membership vote.

Strategic considerations raised in plenary:

- Create a special body to develop the terms of reference (avoid being imposed by NEC, then subject to approval by members).
- Hold debates.
- Create committees of members in favour or against the proposed increase.
- Ensure that members don't confuse the proposal for a progressive dues structure with the proposal for a dues increase aimed at strengthening the strike/defense fund.

4. PUBLIC PERCEPTION ABOUT UNIONS AND MEMBERS' PERCEPTION ABOUT CAPE

Desired outcome: We need to create spaces where activists can meet, share and grow.

To this end, the group recommends the following:

- Focus education and communication at the grassroots: CAPE needs to arm members with information to counter negative stereotypes.
- Change the conversation: by acting as a benchmark, our gains benefit the entire population.

Strategic considerations raised in plenary:

- We also need to engage the public about the benefit of having unions in the public service
- CAPE is the third-largest union in the public service, but not well-known.
- Champion progressive values to showcase how we care more broadly for society as a whole (the poor, the working class, equality issues, human rights); dispel the myth that we're solely self-interested.
- Establish a clear delineation between politicians and the public service; we work for you!

STRATEGIC PLANS



5. LOCAL CAPACITY

Desired outcome: Let's work together: local leaders and stewards can play a more prominent role in defending our members.

To this end, the group recommends the following:

- Provide learning opportunities for local leaders and stewards on specific topics (harassment, performance assessments, etc.).
- Clearly identify CAPE's position on issues.
- Create a roadmap: what to do when members ask for help.
- Establish a network of stewards/local leaders.
- Ensure local leaders stay on top of workplace issues.
- Promote ongoing communication between local leaders and members.
- Ensure regions have access to learning opportunities.
- Share stories highlighting successes.

Strategic considerations raised in plenary:

- The work of stewards will need to be more political.
- Consider having an elected chief steward.
- Ensure that local executive members and stewards are assigned work based on their interests.

6. GOVERNANCE & STRUCTURE

Desired outcome: Let's build a more democratic and representative union.

To this end, the group recommends the following:

- There ought to be a more equal division of powers between the president, the national executive committee and locals.
- CAPE should ensure its governance and constitution guarantees representativity: workplaces, groups, demographics.
- Survey the membership on what works and what doesn't with the way CAPE is organized.
- Strike a constitution committee.
- Tap existing knowledge and experience of our members.
- Engage the membership in this process: hold meetings and votes, make the process accessible, provide an overview of how the structure currently works, present possible options with diagrams, documents, research on other organizations.
- Consider hiring an organization design consultant with a social justice background.

Strategic considerations raised in plenary:

- Use our values as a starting-point for discussions about our governance.
- Use this process as a means to counter apathy; engage members in the re-creation/shaping of their union.
- This process could be promoted during a presidential post-federal election tour.



IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

The following are listed in no particular order:

- Reply to Trudeau's open letter to the public service; engage in open dialogue involving all Federal public service unions.
- Prepare and send a message to all local leaders regarding some of the proposed changes discussed at the Summit. This same message will allow us to impart the direction provided to labour relations officers regarding local participation in LMCCs, the evolving role of stewards and how to collaborate effectively with the union at the national level. Links to the summit report and the Guide to Running Effective and Democratic Locals will be included. Specific attention should be placed on regional locals, where the physical presence of the LRO is rare.
- Reinvigorate the 'Heroes' network: focus on action-oriented messages (rather than the normal info-sharing newsletter).
- Accelerate training opportunities for activists:
 - PSAC union school: 5 individuals have already put their names forward; we will provide support to ensure their participation.
 - CAPE's own training in mid-November; we hope to register as many new local leaders as possible.
 - Joint Learning Program: Emmanuelle Tremblay will meet with JLP secretariat and devise a strategy to enhance our role in the program. Could later include a letter from CAPE President to departments' ADMs of HR to recommend using JLP as a mechanism to re-establish constructive links between unions and management in the workplace.
- In addition to votes that are part of the AGM process, surveys will need to be conducted on several topics. This should be well timed and communicated ahead of time to avoid confusion from members:
 - Bargaining survey is the most urgent one (timeline of approx. 3 weeks)
 - Survey on options for a dues increase model to support the defense and strike fund
 - Survey on CAPE values in order to inform the process of governance/structure reform.
- Develop terms of reference for:
 - Defense and Strike Fund
 - Criteria for CAPE's financial support of social justice causes
- Call a meeting of the constitution and bylaws

THANK YOU.

CAPE wishes to extend a warm and kind thank you to everyone who contributed to making this summit a success.

As an organization that relies heavily on the work of volunteers, we wish to recognize that many of our union leaders, activists and staff gave up part of their weekend to help us pave a brighter future for our organization.

LET'S STAY IN TOUCH!

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