



New Direction for CAPE

Membership townhall
February 7, 2024

President Nate Prier

 **Outline**

- Strategic landscape analysis
- Moving to an organizing model
- Defining social unionism

Housekeeping – We will have a proper vetting system for these meetings by the next one, but for this one we are disabling the chat as we can't confidently check members ID in that chat and want to avoid harassing or traumatizing material being shared, but I am committing to having an open chat with a proper vetting system in the future.

You can submit questions through the Q & A chat though to be asked by staff. Members will only be allowed to speak if they've done a sound check beforehand so we don't injure our interpreters.

But let's get into it.



Strategic landscape

- Economic landscape
 - Modest economic growth
 - Persistent inflation
 - Low unemployment rate
 - High interest rates
- Key takeaways
 - Canada expected to avoid recession – GDP growth slightly higher than expected
 - Interest rate highs and inflation = fragile household economies
 - Job market strength and increased labour movement activity mean competitive wage demands are possible

This strategic landscape analysis, which is still in its early days but our research staff have pulled this together to describe our current strategic landscape. I encourage you to read through the long version of this presentation, specifically the strategic landscape slides (and the speaking notes) to get a sense of why I came to these conclusions.

- Modest growth in Canadian economy (1.7%) projected to 2027
- CPI Inflation expected to remain above 3% (persistent inflation) – keep in mind that we achieved below inflation wage increases in the last round, and should probably fight hard to keep above inflation so we don't take a pay cut again
- Projected unemployment rate to stay quite low (~6 percent to 2028)
- Interest rate hikes likely to stop, but recent hikes mean still quite high



Strategic landscape

- Political landscape
 - Federal government finances stable; high debt
 - Austerity planned but major cuts before 2025 unlikely
 - Conservative majority a real possibility
 - Increasing public sector labour militancy
 - Major shifts in private sector labour militancy

- Government finances remain viable with debt-to-GDP ratio falling, but net debt still high – unlikely to see budget balancing until 2030
- Austerity still planned with reduction to public service key target; Liberals unlikely to proceed to major sudden cuts before 2025 election
- Conservative majority very likely possibility in 2025 election
- Canadian labour movement has seen quite significant recent actions – wildcat strikes (CUPE), Front Commun in QC), PSAC strike (largest in Canadian history)
- US labour movement has also seen massive labour disruptions (e.g. recent UAW strike) and increasing militancy within specific unions



Strategic landscape

- Federal public sector labour landscape
 - National Joint Council = divide and conquer
 - Solidarity pacts historically not sustainable but mostly informal agreements
 - Federal public sector not covered by anti-scab legislation
 - Pattern bargaining approach means PSAC often only strike threat
 - PSAC leadership possibly changing soon; PIPSC elections in 2024
- CAPE
 - Rapid growth, 1/3 of members quite new
 - 1/3 Rand, low election turnout, low collective agreement ratification turnout
 - Historic arbitration approach
 - Many “defunct” locals (11 with no president; three with no executives at all)

• FPS Labour Landscape

- The National Joint Council is a
- NJC table is often seen as a divide and conquer space; solidarity pacts often crumble, but have occasionally been successful (e.g. Harper sick days austerity blocked)
- FPS not covered by anti-scab legislation; pattern bargaining approach means PSAC often only strike threat
- PSAC leadership to change soon (uncertain);

PIPSC elections in 2024

- CAPE

- CAPE has grown rapidly - 34% of members have been members less than 5 years
- Nearly 1/3 of CAPE members are RAND (so not registered with the union and communicating with us); 10 percent national electoral turnout despite it being a record setting election in most categories; less than half of members voted on recent collective agreements
- Historic arbitration approach has meant we don't have an ordinary member bargaining culture – arbitration approach means that PSAC is often left to be the one to truly set the pattern, and let's keep in mind that PSAC took below inflation wage increases even after striking last round. We can't rely on this to get basic things like above inflation compensation.
- Many “defunct” locals (11 with no president; 3 with no executive at all)



Potential key issues for members

- Inflation still incredibly high
- Ongoing housing crisis
- Work-life balance in crisis
- Election-bargaining timing – what role?

If you received our emails about this presentation, you have the presentation version – the long version which will be sent out after has a strategic landscape analysis which is still in its early days but is an attempt our research staff have pulled together to describe our current strategic landscape....I'm not going to go

through it all in the interests of time here today, but I encourage you to read through the long version of this presentation, specifically the strategic landscape slides (and the speaking notes) to get a sense of why I came to these conclusions.

I should note too that we have already tasked the National Executive Committee with doing a strategic planning retreat to come up with a serious three year plan, and we will be having strategic planning exercises with locals and equity groups going forward. So this is a pretty economic take on things but I think makes some important points to consider when I get into the meat of the presentation

- Inflation still incredibly high (daily expenses, debt impact)
- Ongoing housing crisis (rent increased 9% in 2023 across the country, which means something pretty different depending on the city you're in but still not a great statistic....also the interest rate impact)
- Work-life balance in crisis – telework flagged as key initial response, but levels of household stress since the pandemic are off the charts and will require a fairly holistic approach
- Election-bargaining timing – what role should we play in the former, which is in 2025 whereas our contracts expire in 2026 and 2027



Potential key issues for members

Key considerations moving towards bargaining

- Potential new government just before bargaining
- Workforce adjustments impacting leverage
- AI impacting job classification and work - particularly for TRs
- Bargaining staging and pattern with other major federal public sector unions

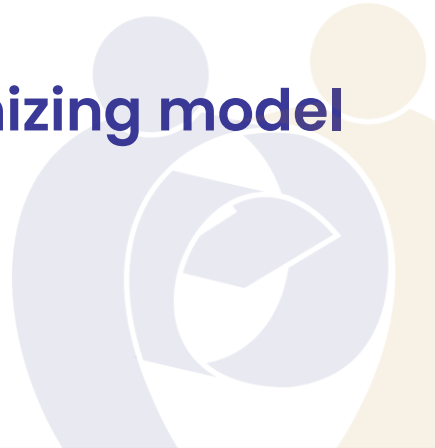
- **Key considerations moving towards bargaining:**

- Potential new government just before bargaining – and if the polls mean anything it might be a strongly Conservative one with a lot of the same advisors and party stances as the Harper admin, which was a very rough patch for FPS
- WFA impacting leverage – if there are

huge cuts just before we enter into bargaining in earnest, this will significantly shift the landscape

- AI impacting job classification and work (particularly for TRs) – this is bleeding into many fields and will grow over time.
- Bargaining staging and pattern with other major FPS unions – entering into a proto Front Commun style arrangement (like they had in QC with multiple public sector unions making joint demands and pacts), so a formalized solidarity pact with specific targets, might increase our leverage but the general bargaining timeline will be PSAC's large components with collective agreements expiring, then CAPE, then most PIPSC classifications

Moving to an organizing model



I just want to point out that this is a lot of information, but that we're going to be reorganizing our stewards training around it and working to train the rank and file on the concepts more systematically over the coming months

Also, there are some major free organizer trainings coming up that follows the model laid out here, so I encourage you to reach out to get signed up for those after this presentation if you'd like and invite members of your local to them. Watch your emails for a follow-up to this with more direction on that.

What is organizing?



Image description: A tweet from Lou Fantini that says, “how you picture workplace organizing vs how workplace organizing actually looks.” Two images are below the text: on the left is a classical painting of a battlefield scene in the French Revolution, specifically Liberty Leading the People by Eugène Delacroix . On the right is the icon for Excel spreadsheets.

****Accessibility requirement: must read what on the image and describe it.****



"[**Organizing means**] waking up in the morning with an explicit plan to build the universe of people who are not yet part of your organizing, who are not in your social media feed, who you don't talk to, who might even think that they don't like you, who might even think that they're opposed to you— that's the work of organizers and organizing, going out to build unity, and solidarity, and expand the universe of people in our movement."

Jane McAlevey, No Shortcuts (2016)

Jane F. McAlevey is an American union organizer, author, and political commentator.

She is a Senior Policy Fellow at the University of California, Berkeley's Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, and a columnist at The Nation.

No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age (2016)

Rules to Win By (2023); co-authored with Abby Lawlor.

Abby Lawlor is a second-year JD candidate at Berkeley Law and a graduate student researcher at the UC Berkeley Labor Center



Service model versus organizing model

- **Service model** – often reactive, formal representation within limited labour relations framework, closed negotiations by professionals...often staff and executive driven
- **Organizing model** – rank and file sets goals, determines correct strategy, and systematically gets a strong majority unified to take action to win...primarily rank and file driven (anybody can do it)

NOTE: these are not mutually exclusive, but point towards tendencies in terms of the primary focus of the union's resources and direction. I don't know of any unions that have entirely one or the other system in place, as you do need professional labour relations advice but I would argue you also need a strong system to get your coworkers able to act collectively

I should also mention this will be a very surface level summary and other resources will be made available to the membership on these concepts.



Advocacy vs. mobilizing vs. organizing

	Advocacy	Mobilizing	Organizing
Theory of change	Expertise, access, insider knowledge of key players	Optics, public relations, symbolic actions that sway public opinion	Size of organization, coordination among members in a structure
Who matters?	Paid specialists, staff, elected leaders	Elected leaders, activists, currently involved members	All members, organic leaders, and allies
Role of members	Minimal; transactional	On as-needed basis	Primary agents – planning and executing sustained strategic actions
Examples of action	Briefing standing committees; meeting with ministers	Photo-op for press, occasional rallies or public actions	Escalating tactics (majority petitions, disruptions of business) as part of long-term strategy

- One of the questions that stumps many union activists, even experienced ones, is: “what is your theory of power?”, which you could rewrite as “what is your theory of change?”....so how does change actually happen?
- This table is how Jane McAlevey frames a few typologies – note that it’s never this clean cut; you often need all three, but many organizations stop at mobilization at most....this isn’t to pit them against each other, just to show different ways of conceiving of how change is made

Image description: A chart with three major headings: Advocacy, Mobilizing and Organizing with brief points for each in the categories of: Theory of change, Who matters? Role of members and Examples of action.



Ultimate goal of an organizing model

In a word: power

We are more able to assert ourselves when the rank and file takes full responsibility for their union.

Requires:

- Education
- Leaders
- Constantly expanding base
- Commitment to deep democracy

- The point is to make the union more powerful – in the workplace so we can change our working conditions directly; so we can be feared at the bargaining table and expand our coverage and our gains; be able to win on things that are important to us

- Power is pretty important – we are vulnerable individually on the job, but we have power in big numbers that act together. We need to impose costs to the employer doing whatever it wants (such as with Phoenix). Power we have corresponds to how many members we can engage and what we can build the confidence up to do.

- This requires the rank and file to assume the union is a vehicle to achieve concrete goals – that the union is theirs, and it's there to leverage power

- In the current model of CAPE, the President and the NEC have an inordinate amount of power – we encourage everyone to get involved in subcommittees to suggest constitutional changes that make us less centralized, as an organizing model over time should make our rank and file far more confident in asserting themselves, and we should work together to formalize that at the AGM in October where those changes can actually be made

- BUT we don't' just get there because it's a nice thing to do and we have ideals

- Members need to study and educate each other on how to pick the right strategy to win – constant study of the terrain we're operating on, robust debate about the conditions we're under, aimed at setting priorities on how to win
- We need to constantly be identifying leaders in the workplace – just meaning people who can move a lot of people
- We need to be constantly expanding the base of people actively participating in building out union structures
- We need to have systems in place for serious debate and disagreement that allows the rank and file to direct the union



Key organizing model concepts

- Power structure analysis
- Workplace charting and list building
- Identifying organic leaders
- Structured organizing conversations
- Ladder of engagement
- Consistent review

- Power Mapping

- Where does the employer have power? Where do we have power? What kind of power do we need to build to win on this or that thing? Getting specific – what people, what organizations, what spaces do

we need to move.

- Requires us to quite seriously frame this as an us and them thing – many members have felt our relationship with the employer was far too collaborative as we took major losses, and that we might benefit from seeing this a bit more competitively
- Workplace Charting and List Building
 - Gets you to go through your team list and see where people are at at a given point in time, identify potential leaders, and lets you check off if anything you're doing to advance a campaign is actually working

- Identifying Organic Leaders
 - There's a distinction between an activist and a leader
 - An activist is somebody who is passionate and willing to do something
 - An organic leader is somebody who people respect and trust and might follow into action (regardless of their politics) – the simple explanation is “people who can move others”
- Structured Organizing Conversations
 - Different than a chat – these are careful conversations with a purpose, aiming to move somebody into action...there's

a bit of a science to it

- Ladder of Engagement
 - In any campaign you're going to have to take escalating steps to win something – say from petitions to demonstrations to pickets – and having a sense of where you want to go beforehand lets you see how things are advancing
- Structure Tests
 - Our workplaces
- Consistent Review
 - You always want to carefully study how a campaign is landing and how it's moving people, and readjusting with new data as you go along.



STRUCTURE TESTS

REMEMBER:

ORGANIZING VS. MOBILIZING



Image description: Centered at the top are the words Structured tests. Below that the words “remember: organizing versus mobilizing”

Under the organizing side are images of hubs and many spokes with the spokes having arrows directing outwards and the words “expanding universe of workers.”

Below that is a clipboard with a sports play mapped out with X’s and O’s with lines and arrows in various directions and it says “strategic”.

Below that is a chart with an sharply upwards growing arrow and the words “more people, bigger wins”.

Under mobilizing there is a smart phone with a few lines coming off it connecting to dots to represent nodes and the words “too few people to change much”

Under that is an image of two people talking and it says “talking to people who already agree with you”.

Below that is a chart with a slowly climbing arrow representing slow growth and it

says “limited growth”



Key considerations for organizing model

What it takes to win big:

- **Build a big base** of ordinary, active members
- **Put members in the driver's seat**, they must lead union in almost all aspects
- **Step outside the echo chamber**, reach out to those who disagree

- To win big changes, we need to grow our base of active members who have confidence to take collective action – it is fundamentally a numbers game, but more than just votes or signatures....moving up that ladder of engagement means we have a confident and capable rank and file

- Membership engagement can't just be with people who are already paying attention – need to get out there and speak to people where they're at
 - Note – this is very different than what we might be used to in government with consultation and engagement....this is aimed at winning on key issues, meaning that we're building our power out systematically

Discussion





Business unionism versus social unionism

- **Business unionism:** narrow focus on quite narrow definition of “workplace” issues; often top-down and dependent on leadership to act; often accepts norms and rules of labour relations framework
- **Social unionism:** sees membership as part of larger political movement; “whole worker” approach to interests of members; at least in theory, aims for vibrant internal democracy; aims to use own power to creative ends

 **But...**

- These definitions are fuzzy and are not the point
- The key issues that matter in both “types” are:
 - Collective action framework and capacity
 - Strategic repertoire
 - Internal organizational practices

- Collective action framework and capacity
 - What is the culture and how do we see our interests – logics of “how we do things around here” have a self-perpetuating logic
 - What capacity do we have to act – and how do we understand “action”
- Strategic repertoire
 - Strategies and tactics we usually choose to get to a given point – how effective is it?
- Internal organizational practices
 - Dynamics of how union usually runs; how power is distributed in it – how do we actually decide what to do?



Key principles of social unionism

- Members are members of communities
- Strategic alliances outside workplace
- Work with ALL workers in a workplace to effect change
- Rank and file take responsibility for union affairs
- Confidently take positions on justice in our society
- Bargain for the common good

•Defend the rights of members as members of communities – also called a whole worker approach, where:

- You can see structures in society spilling over into the workplace – so for example anti-black racism in society has a huge impact on outcomes for black federal public servants

- Material pressures outside narrow workplace confines – say housing affordability – hugely impact our members, and unions have exceptional capacity to increase pressure on politicians

•Strategic alliances with groups outside of workplace (e.g. with parents if you're teachers, with climate movement if you're an auto worker, etc)

- Increases power at bargaining table by increasing pressure points on employer
- Particularly relevant for public servants where your employer is the government and is fundamentally politicians when the gloves come off

•Work across all workers in a workplace to raise standards for all

- Increases capacity for mass action (e.g. teachers walking out with education workers, having capacity to not cross picket line)

•Rank and file takes responsibility for union affairs and designs strategy

- Decrease distance from union of ordinary workers, instead of "service" relationship where mostly paid staff end up being brokers of insider union knowledge to members

- Makes things like bargaining less the domain of experts and more the domain of organized workers with their own material interests driving the strategic conversation
- Confidently take positions on issues of justice in our society
 - EDI training is not enough - recognizing injustice means we can apply collective power to right wrongs, and we should take them seriously
 - Strategy rebounds on employer - a confident union applying governments on as many issues as possible builds leverage in "traditional" bargaining
- Bargaining for the common good
 - We're workers in a workplace, but we also live in the world - working with other unions to push for "common goods" in bargaining can improve the world we live in AND build out the solidarity relationships necessary to carry us through a confrontation with the employer
 - E.g. if we're fighting for telework, it means we can fight for federal government to convert our buildings into better uses than employment zones



Why is this strategic?

- **Our employer is the government** – politicians with a lot of pressure points
- **Our union has chronically low engagement and visibility** – expanding our scope expands our points of contact in a virtuous cycle
- **Mass, cross-union workplace organizing** means we can have serious solidarity when it counts and increase pressure
- Telework, our least sectarian campaign issue, has many potential points of entry that can pivot public support



What should members do?

- **Sign up to be stewards** – training will now involve organizing training
- **Attend local strategy sessions** (independently and with the national office)
- **Join NEC subcommittees**
- **Join equity caucuses**
- **Attend strategic planning exercises** through the CAPE national office

Discussion





Image description: An image showing people of various ethnicities and ages walking in a march. The front row of people are holding a large, wide banner that says, “Collective bargaining for the common good”. In the background you can see various people with protest signs (the writing on them is not very legible from this distance of the photo) and they are wearing masks as this was taken during the pandemic.

What we as a union are able to do over the next three years depends heavily on you, and how many members you’re able to bring alongside you. So let’s get out there and start organizing!