



WATCH

OUT!

Spot the early warning signs.
Stop privatization before it starts.

CUPE members are perfectly placed to spot privatization threats. As frontline workers, we can protect public services by stopping privatization before it starts.

CUPE

BE ALERT

These are some warning signs that your employer may be getting ready to privatize services.

Chronic underfunding

When a service is chronically underfunded, it hurts quality and access. Over time, this can erode public confidence, opening the door to privatization. Chronic underfunding also makes employers vulnerable to new ways to privatize, like social impact bonds.

Concessions

Attacks at the bargaining table on wages, benefits, or job security can signal plans to privatize. Employers sometimes threaten privatization to get concessions from workers. But employers who get concessions almost always come back for more. Often, privatization goes ahead anyway. CUPE's collective bargaining policy sets out a plan to prepare CUPE locals and members to fight back against attacks during bargaining.

Conferences

When employers go to events promoting privatization, they get a one-sided sales pitch. These events are often sponsored by the same corporations that want the contracts. There's little or no balance – making employers think there's no alternative to privatization. Keep


an eye out for the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships (CCPPP) and other industry groups.

Consultants

Check visitor logs and other records to spot corporate consultants and salespeople meeting with your employer. Consulting firms make millions advising public sector employers to privatize while, at the same time, working with corporations ready to step in and profit from privatization. Because they also work as auditors, the so-called "Big Four" consulting firms (KPMG, Ernst & Young (EY), PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and Deloitte) can appear impartial. But they evaluate public-private partnerships (P3s) and other privatization deals through a lens that favours privatization and makes it seem like the best option every time.

Contractors

Even a small amount of contracting out can grow into a big problem if left unchecked. Keep close tabs on any contractors in your workplace. Document and report all problems and find out when contracts expire. This will help build a case to bring work back in house.



Watch out for potential violations of your collective agreement, and work with your steward or local executive to enforce your contract.

Core service reviews

Service reviews are usually billed as a way to make services more efficient. But the real agenda is often privatization. Recommendations can include restructuring, amalgamating or centralizing services, or increasing the use of volunteers. These and other changes can provide cover for employers to privatize. The consultants who run the reviews offer cookie-cutter solutions (sometimes they literally cut and paste from one review to another!) that promote cuts to front-line staff, contracting out, and other attacks on public services.

Corporate buzzwords

Consultants and employers love “efficiency” programs with names like LEAN, total quality management (TQM) or continuous improvement. But these schemes aren’t about making services better – they’re about identifying and preparing services for privatization. Terms like alternative service delivery, social impact bond and asset recycling are really just different names for the same bad policy: privatization.



Corporations cozying up

Check lobbyist registries and political donation information, where it’s available, to see which corporations are contacting elected officials, and who they’re donating to. You can use this information to spot a politician being primed to privatize. If you’re looking at lobbyists, search by corporation name (as well as the name of any consultants they might use), by the name of CEOs and other senior officials, as well as by topic. Corporate donations to political candidates and parties are banned federally, and in some provinces and municipalities, so search for CEO and other corporate officials by name.

Cuts

When employers and politicians talk about budget cuts, revenue shortfalls, or a need to “find efficiencies,” it paves the way for corporations to make their pitch, promising false savings. Not replacing equipment like plows or mowers also opens the door to contractors.

Unfilled positions

When workers who resign or retire aren’t replaced, it can be a sign that privatization is coming. Unless your collective agreement has complete protection against privatization, employers can use gapping and attrition to get around job security provisions.

BE PREPARED

Making sure members are aware and organized is the key to spotting and stopping privatization. Here are some ways to be prepared.

Set up an anti-privatization or contracting out committee in your local. It's a good way to raise members' awareness about the early warning signs and to coordinate a response to any threats.


Spread the word through face-to-face conversations, postings on bulletin boards, flyers, and the local's web site and social media – whatever combination works best to reach your members. Build communication networks that let you quickly share information and hear back from your members.

Develop a strong member or steward network. Talk regularly with members, supervisors and managers to stay on top of your employer's plans. Your local's staff representative is an important resource to help build your networks and will connect your local with national research, communications, education and other staff.

Negotiate strong collective agreement language that requires the employer to disclose all information about contracting-out plans for services your members provide, or could provide. Get all financial and operations information from your employer. If information is being kept secret, work with your CUPE staff representative and CUPE research staff to file access to information requests. Include contracting out as a standing agenda item for labour-management meetings.

Monitor your employer. Get volunteers to take turns attending all public meetings of the employer (municipal council, agency, board, etc.). If no one can attend, monitor and review all meeting agendas, minutes and reports. Build relationships with local elected officials.

Identify contractors who already operate at your workplace and think ahead to other work they may go after. Find out when contracts expire, so you have a timeline and target to make your case to bring the work back in house. Track problems with quality and safety



of contracted out work. This strengthens arguments for bringing work back in house and is useful evidence to fight any future privatization.

Watch what managers, politicians and corporate representatives say in the media and at public events. Get information about companies that contract work in your sector and the consultants who promote privatization. Follow your employer, and any companies that may want to take over work in your area, on social media. Use Google alerts or other online tools to track news about your workplace, sector and community.



TAKE ACTION

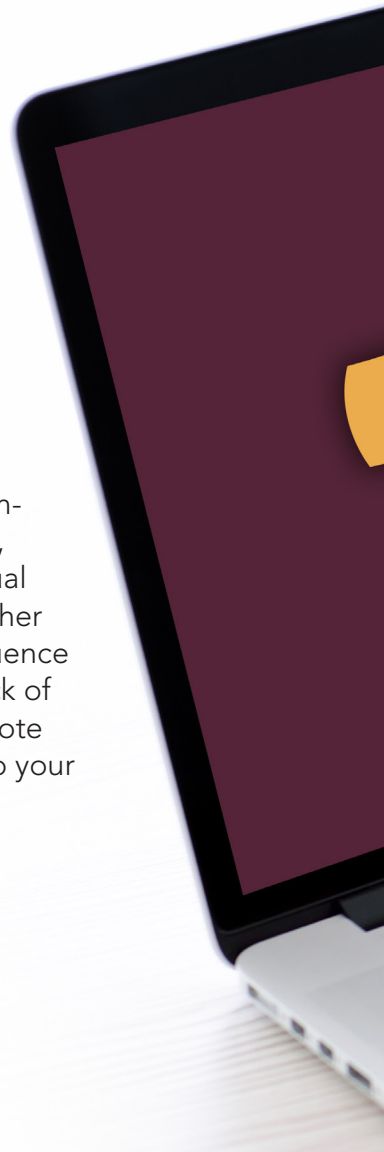
Early detection and quick action can stop the spread of privatization. Here's how you and your local can fight any future privatization threat.


Host a workshop. Work with your union education representative to host a workshop on privatization in your local or send members to a CUPE workshop. Workshops can be as short as one hour and can be adapted to fit your local's needs.

Strengthen your collective agreement. It's our first and best line of defence against privatization. Know and defend your current contract language. Work to get the best no contracting out language and the broadest description of who is in your bargaining unit (scope or recognition clause). Negotiate successor rights, which ensure that the collective agreement will still cover bargaining unit members if your employer contracts out their work. Table language to bring contracted-out work back in house and to set up a permanent contracting in committee.

Communicate regularly. Keep privatization a top-of-mind issue for your members by sharing news about privatization threats and wins. Watch the CUPE National site and your provincial division site for news you can share.

Build relationships with local elected officials and other community leaders. Have informal, regular meetings with individual councillors, trustees, or any other elected officials that have influence over your employer. Keep track of how elected representatives vote on issues that are important to your workplace and local.





Connect in your community. Get your local involved in community issues and campaigns. By showing that we care and are involved in the community, we put a public face to our work. We also lay the groundwork for strong local coalitions by creating the allies we need to defend public services.

Promote public services. Share ideas for strengthening public services with employers and the public. We have the expertise and we know our work best. Find ways to highlight the value of public services in the community and what the public stands to lose if services are privatized.

Privatization comes in many forms including contracting out and P3s. Our guide on what privatization is, and who's pushing it, is available at cupe.ca/privatization-buzzwords.



WATCH OUT!

No matter what it's called or how it's dressed up, we know that privatization hurts jobs, services, and communities.

If you spot a warning sign of privatization, spread the word in your local. Talk to your steward, anti-privatization committee and your local executive. Work with your local executive to make sure your CUPE national staff representative is in the loop. They'll help you assess the threat and connect you with other national staff in education, communications and research to develop a fightback plan.

**Together, we can stop privatization
before it starts.**

For up-to-date anti-privatization information and resources, visit
cupe.ca/privatization

