

Background:

This past winter the media paid particular attention to the role of labour unions in the Manitoba NDP leadership campaign. CUPE, as the largest union in the country and with the most Union delegates at convention, was of particular interest.

It seemed just about every news article, opinion piece, and editorial about the leadership race would touch on CUPE. Unsurprisingly, some of these articles went so far as to suggest there was something sinister about our involvement in the NDP.

What these critics fail to realize is that we don't 'support' the NDP – we ARE the NDP. The NDP was created as a joint project by the Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian Commonwealth Federation.

To say we are a “supporter” of the NDP is insufficient – we were a *founding partner* of the NDP.



Our Values

The NDP believes in a people-centered society. While Conservatives and Liberals act in the interests of corporations and the 1%, the NDP is focused on creating a more democratic, cooperative, and fair society.

We believe people should have greater control in the economy, our workplaces, and our community.

Our party, the NDP, is the party of universal health care, public education, the Canadian Pension Plan, Old Age Security, public insurance and utilities. The NDP respects the rights of workers to form unions, collectively bargaining, and to strike when necessary.

The NDP believes in a cooperative relationship with Canada's First Peoples – a relationship built on an understanding of the historical wrongs Canada imposed on the Inuit, Metis and Aboriginal people, and a commitment to right these historical wrongs and create a more just society.

The NDP views access to early learning and childhood education as a right for all – not just the wealthy - and especially important, in the liberation of working class women. These are the values of the NDP – a working class party for, and by, working class people.

Our Record

The Manitoba NDP has a record that we can be proud of.

Pensions:

While Conservative and Liberal governments across this country have been attacking retirement security, the Manitoba NDP has been working to ensure the security of pension plans for Manitobans.

The Manitoba NDP has made changes that enhance the security of pension plans, have backfilled funding in several public pensions plans, and established a COLA account for the Healthcare Employees Pension Plan. The Manitoba NDP has been a vocal supporter of the CLC CPP expansion program, and an opponent of raising eligibility for OAS/GIS from 65 to 67.

Simply, the Manitoba NDP has, by far, the best pension track record in the country.

Our Record

Public Services:

While the Harper Conservatives and other provincial governments have instituted “austerity” programs in response to the Great Recession, Manitoba’s NDP have protected our vital public services – ensuring that Manitobans continue to have access to health care, education services, and other public services that they deserve.

In addition, the Manitoba NDP has made huge investments in infrastructure, flood protection, and in Manitoba Hydro – all of which are driving our Canadian leading economic growth.

Unlike during the 1990’s, when the Filmon Conservatives laid off frontline government employees and unilaterally rolled back wages, the Manitoba NDP has avoided layoffs and respected the collective bargaining process with CUPE and other public employee unions.

Economy:

While other provinces are reeling under lower oil revenues, the Manitoba NDP’s steady economy track record is paying dividends for Manitoba.

Economic forecasts for Manitoba in 2015 are positive, with GDP and job prospects continuing to outpace Canadian averages.

The Conference Board of Canada is forecasting Manitoba to be an economic leader in 2015 and 2016, predicting a respective 2.9% and 3.0% economic growth. A return to historical yields in agriculture, combined with greater mining production, increasing American demand and a lower Canadian dollar should improve Manitoba’s transportation manufacturing industry.

These rebounds, combined with ongoing major government investment in Manitoba Hydro and infrastructure, should ensure the continued positive growth of the local economy.

This stable economic performance continues to have positive impacts on employment opportunities for Manitobans. As of February, 2015, Manitoba’s unemployment rate was 5.6% - the third lowest unemployment rate in Canada, far below the 6.8% national average.

In even better news, the average weekly earnings of Manitobans rose 4.6% in 2014 - the second highest wage growth in the country.

Our Priorities:

While the Manitoba NDP has a good track record, there are things it could do better. When meeting with government over the past year we have emphasized the following priorities for government:

Defined Benefit Pensions:

Unlike Manitoba teachers who have a defined benefit (DB) pension plan, education support workers are stuck with a 2nd tier defined contribution (DC) pension plan.

In fact, Manitoba is the only province where education support workers are in a DC pension plan. We have met with government and informed them that the transition to a DB pension plan for education support workers is a major priority for CUPE.

This continues to be a major issue at bargaining tables.

Long Term Care:

While Manitoba has a better record than most provinces on long-term care, we know that there are improvements still to be made.

Simply put, our long term care facilities are understaffed in general, and all too often we are working short of the already inadequate staffing levels.

We have made it clear to government that to improve care for society's most vulnerable in our long-term care facilities, the government must increase staffing levels, increase the monitoring of facilities and ensure transparent reporting of the results, improve access to training, and ensure that long-term care workers in the private sector have access to HEBB pension, or an equivalent alternative plan.

Pay Equity for Social Services and Child Care:

CUPE Manitoba continues to lobby government to introduce pay equity legislation for social services and child care sectors.

While *ad hoc* programs like funding for wage increase for early childhood educator and community living direct service workers has been welcome, only from a true pay equity process can we deliver the sort of equity that these sectors require.

Getting Involved

Manitobans will be going to the polls twice in the next year – once this fall to elect a new federal government, and again in the spring of 2016 to elect our provincial government.

To elect NDP governments CUPE members and their families need to be out knocking on doors, making phone calls, and encouraging their family members, friends, neighbors and colleagues to vote NDP.

If you know the NDP candidate for MP or MLA feel free to reach out and offer to assist their campaign.

If you're unsure of who to talk to, feel free to contact CUPE

Manitoba and we can help you volunteer. Your local may consider inviting your local NDP candidate to meet with members at a meeting or social event.

Today we are at an historic crossroads for the labour movement in Manitoba and across Canada.

We have the chance to elect a labour-friendly NDP federal government for the first time ever, and re-elect the Manitoba NDP for a record 5th consecutive time.

As CUPE members it is on us to remember our roots, fight for our party, and win the next election.



CUPE pushing back against Bill C-51, March 14 2015