



CUPE38 Connection brings you the latest updates, collaborative events, and resources to strengthen our community.

Join Our Next Meeting



Date : Tuesday, January 27, 2026

Time: 7:00 p.m. MST

Location : Virtual via Zoom

Agenda : Regular business and elections

Four (4) delegates to the Canadian Labour Congress Convention May 11-15, 2026, in Winnipeg, MB

Three (3) delegates to the CUPE AB Division Convention March 18-20, 2026, in Edmonton, AB

RSVP : office@cupe38.org or call [403-233-2700](tel:403-233-2700)

2026 – A Year to Stand Together



2026 is already shaping up to be a year of significant activity. On the eve of the new year, Calgary experienced a second catastrophic water main break. With no warning signs to alert us, the Bowness/Montgomery area faced a critical disruption to its water supply, placing additional systemic pressure on the city's entire water network.

What is particularly frustrating is the kneejerk reaction to blame Administration and City workers. Rather than rallying together in a moment of crisis, we are seeing a familiar “blame game” narrative take hold. What we know at this time is that there were no indications a failure was imminent. We also know that past Councils – stretching back decades – have underfunded infrastructure maintenance and upgrades in an effort to “keep taxes low.”

The Independent Review Panel has now released its report on the Bears paw South Feeder main. While there is much to absorb, an initial review shows that the Panel acknowledged the chronic underfunding of the water utility. Past Councils have consistently set a tone of budget reductions, cuts, and doing everything “on the cheap.” Many of us remember well the persistent message from successive Councils: Just find cuts.

Instead of directing blame toward City workers, perhaps it is time – given that Calgary is the third largest city in Canada – to have an honest conversation about what it truly takes to fund a world class municipality. We cannot continue to nickel and dime our city budget while still expecting top-tier results.

At the provincial level, the Smith government is currently facing upwards of 24 recall campaigns, driven in large part by its repeated use of the notwithstanding clause to override constitutional rights in Alberta. The government is also pressing ahead with the highly unpopular provincial police force and the proposed Alberta Pension Plan. While the Smith government has publicly stated there will be no election this spring, there is widespread speculation about a provincial election in the fall of 2026, potentially accompanied by referendums on policing and pension changes.

The danger of Alberta withdrawing from the Canada Pension Plan in favour of an ill-defined Alberta Pension Plan is that we would be gambling with our collective retirements. We have already seen the provincial investment firm AIMCo make disastrous investment decisions that resulted in more than \$2 billion in losses – followed by the Alberta government shielding AIMCo from litigation. This track record raises serious concerns about trusting AIMCo or the provincial government to responsibly manage our retirement security.

Closer to home, Local 38 and the City unions will begin preparing for bargaining this spring, with formal negotiations scheduled for the fall. Member expectations are high, and we will need a strong, united membership to send a clear message to Council: the age of austerity is long over. Our members continue to feel the effects of the past several years of inflation. We will be seeking a fair settlement for all City workers—workers who show up every day to operationalize Council's decisions. We must not return to a time when Council routinely attacked Administration in public for narrow political purposes.

As we step into 2026, we do so fully aware that the challenges facing our city and province are real – but so is the strength of our collective voice. Whether confronting infrastructure failures, defending public services, or preparing for the upcoming round of bargaining, one truth remains constant: when we stand together, we shape the future. Local 38 will continue to advocate for the fairness and respect our members deserve.

Union Advantage: New Report Confirms Gains for Alberta Workers



Parkland Institute

For years, Alberta governments have pressed ahead with a steady stream of anti-union legislation aimed at curbing labour's bargaining power – a push that most recently produced the Back to School Act, the province's most aggressive move yet against workers' rights. Even so, unions have managed to hold their ground and, as a new Parkland Institute report shows, continue to deliver measurable gains for the workers they represent. Drawing on fresh Statistics Canada data, Alberta's Union Advantage: Wages, Equity, and the Power of Collective Bargaining lays out how unionization boosts wages, shrinks pay gaps, and broadens access to benefits.

“The union advantage is undeniable,” says Andrew Stevens, who co-authored the report with Angèle Poirier. The data analyzed in the study places Alberta's overall union wage advantage at 10%, or \$3.40 per hour. That is the amount unionized workers make over their non-union counterparts. But this pay boost does not look the same across industries. Construction workers and educators, for example, see higher gains at 15% and 27% respectively, while unionization brings almost no wage increase in oil and gas. The report also examines cases where average wages appear lower for unionized workers, explaining the demographic and structural factors behind those patterns.

Alberta's vulnerable and precarious workers have much to gain from collective bargaining, as unions play an important role in correcting long-standing inequalities and reducing pay gaps. For women, this translates into an average wage advantage of 19%, compared to 4% for male workers. Unionization also helps shrink the gender wage gap, which falls sharply from 19% in non-unionized workplaces to 8% among those covered by a collective agreement.

These equalizing effects extend to part-time workers, who are disproportionately clustered in low-wage, insecure jobs but see substantial improvements when covered by collective agreements. For unionized part-time workers, the union advantage is a staggering 29%, a difference of \$9.66 an hour over their non-unionized counterparts. This contrasts sharply with the more modest 5% wage advantage for full-time workers.

Unionization also plays a critical role for immigrant workers, who continue to face systemic barriers in the labour market. While Canadian-born employees typically earn more than immigrants, this gap narrows – and in some sectors is eliminated or even reversed – when workers are unionized. The report highlights particularly strong gains in accommodation and food services and in education, industries where immigrants make up a significant share of the workforce.

Beyond wages, unionization has a marked impact on access to benefits like health insurance and pensions. The report shows that 94% of unionized workers in Alberta have access to supplemental benefits, compared to just 79% of non-unionized workers. These gains are especially meaningful in low-wage sectors where benefits are often scarce or entirely absent. Collective agreements secure entitlements such as paid sick leave, parental top-ups, dental and pharmaceutical coverage, and retirement plans, protections that strengthen workers' overall economic security and improve their ability to plan for the future.

For the full report, visit https://www.parklandinstitute.ca/union_advantage

Children's Christmas Party Spreads Holiday Cheer



The holiday spirit was in full swing on December 13 as CUPE Local 38 hosted its annual Children's Christmas Party at the Genesis Centre, welcoming more than 1,000 members and their families for a festive afternoon of fun and celebration.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Social Committee and dedicated volunteers, the Genesis Centre was transformed into a magical winter wonderland. Children and families enjoyed an exciting lineup of activities, including face painting, balloon artists, cosplayers, a magician, festive treat bags, gifts, and – of course – special photo opportunities with Santa Claus.

CUPE Local 38 extends heartfelt thanks to the Social Committee and all the volunteers who generously gave their time and energy to make this event such a success. We also thank the members and their families who joined us to celebrate the season. We look forward to seeing you again next year for another joyful holiday gathering.

Black History Month



In February we celebrate Black History Month. This dedicated month gives us an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the history, contributions, and resilience of Black communities in Canada. It is also a time to reflect on the barriers and inequities that Black Canadians have faced and continue to face today.

Black history in Canada spans more than 400 years and includes people who were enslaved, people who lived freely, and people who built communities despite significant barriers. Black Canadians have contributed as workers, organizers, artists, educators, and leaders, helping to shape our cities, institutions, and public services. Here in Calgary and across Alberta, Black communities continue to play an important role in our workplaces and communities.

Black History Month is especially relevant within the labour movement. Black workers have historically faced discrimination in hiring, wages, and working conditions, and were often excluded from workplace protections. Despite this, Black workers organized, spoke out, and helped advance workplace rights and protections that benefit all workers today.

As a union, taking time to recognize Black History Month is one way we show our commitment to equity, inclusion, and respect in the workplace. Members are encouraged to take part in Black History Month events, webinars, and learning opportunities throughout February as a way to listen, learn, and show support.

[Learn More About Black History Month](#)

Stay Strong and See You Next Month!

Sincerely,

Your Executive Team



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