Public sector unions have for years been negatively affected by efforts to restructure the state and state-funded institutions along neoliberal lines. While private sector unions were the first to suffer the effects of the global economic crisis that began in 2008, there is evidence that the crisis is leading to growing demands by employers for concessions from unions in the broad public sector. It is likely that employers, using expenditure-reduction as their justification, will conduct an intensified offensive against public sector unions, including concessions, layoffs and new efforts to restructure the public sector along neoliberal “lean state” lines. It is extremely unlikely that this offensive will threaten unions as labour relations institutions, but it could have very negative effects on workers and the services they deliver. Public sector unions are, for the most part, ill-equipped to resist an intensified employers’ offensive. This is clearly illustrated by a number of recent settlements reached without work stoppages and by recent strikes, such as the large, high-profile strike of Toronto municipal workers in the summer of 2009. In this context, change within these unions becomes even more urgent. Union renewal always involves the cultivation of a particular mode of union praxis. Currently, most Canadian public sector unions continue to practice social unionism. Three modes of union praxis present themselves as potentially more effective than social unionism: corporate unionism, mobilization unionism and social movement unionism. The alternative with the most promise for public sector workers who wish to defend jobs and services is social movement unionism. However, there are, at present, very few signs of moves to promote this approach within Canadian public sector unions, for reasons that will be briefly considered.