

CUPE Early Childhood Educators are the Best Early Childhood Educators!

Do you know a CUPE Early Childhood Educator that is really making a difference in young learners' lives? Is there a CUPE Early Childhood Education who is part of a really special team?

Then act fast as nominations are now open for the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. Starting today, parents, students, educators and community members can nominate an outstanding educator or support staff member for an award.

Two new awards have been created this year to recognize the unique role that registered Early Childhood Educators play in supporting children and families: Early Childhood Educator of the Year and Full-Day Kindergarten Team of the Year.

The deadline to submit a nomination is February 6, 2012.

To learn more or download a nomination form, visit www.ontario.ca/teachingawards.

CUPE celebrates its success representing Early Childhood Educators in Ontario

The *Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)* wants to welcome you to your Union! CUPE has a long-standing commitment to represent Early Childhood Educators (ECEs). For many years, CUPE has advocated for a publicly funded and delivered early childhood education system. Our position on

universal public child care and early learning programs that integrate school curricula began in the 70s.

Since last summer, we have been working hard to secure representation rights for ECEs in all school boards. To find out more, please contact your local president or National Representative.



The future is ours!

The Ontario government's announcement of a full-day kindergarten program in 2009 was a step in the right direction. In June 2010, the government invited CUPE and other unions who had obtained bargaining rights for ECEs or who had collective agreements which included ECEs, to participate in a Provincial Discussion Table (PDT). We were joined by representatives from the school board associations. The government recognized the original hourly rate it proposed would not survive pay equity challenges. We were able to negotiate standardized wages as well as clarify the funding assumption behind the money provided to school boards for this program.

At our annual conference for school board workers represented by CUPE in Ontario, we committed to organize the ECEs as part of CUPE bargaining units in school boards. We are pleased to tell you that we were successful in obtaining representation rights for

about 600 ECEs as new members. This number will continue to grow every year as we move to full implementation of the program.

In December 2010, the government announced a major reversal in its original plan for delivering the full-day kindergarten program. The government bowed to pressure from groups such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs to allow school boards unlimited ability to contract out the before and after school programs to third-party providers. This position departs from Charles Pascal’s vision and recommendations to have an integrated all-day system. His intention was to make it easy for young children to move from core education programs to before and after school programs, making school the only place to learn all day. Now, the government has opened the door to third-party providers, compromising Pascal’s vision and raising privacy concerns. CUPE was one of the first to condemn this move and continues to work with others who oppose this proposal.



What is CUPE?

CUPE is the largest public sector union in Canada, representing 630 000 workers. CUPE represents school board ECEs and staff in all provinces, totaling more than 100 000 support staff. It was founded in 1963 after the merging of two important unions: the *National Union of Public Service Employees (NUPSE)* and the *National Union of Public Employees (NUPE)*. The merger of NUPE-NUPSE did not happen overnight; it took many years of planning which began in 1956. After seven years of discussions, a report was presented at the Canadian Labour Congress’ convention in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It is on September 24, 1963 that the *Canadian Union of*

Public Employees was born. For more information, visit cupe.ca/history.

How workers are represented on the Ontario School Board Coordinating Committee

The *Ontario School Board Coordinating Committee (OSBCC)* unites CUPE members in the education sector who do the work that makes learning and teaching possible.

They are educational assistants, English as a second language and literacy instructors, administrative assistants, custodians and maintenance personnel, bus drivers, cafeteria employees, information technologists, community advisors, clerical and support staff, both in schools and at the board office. CUPE represents 55,000 members in this sector in Ontario.

The CUPE Ontario division set up the OSBCC in order to deal exclusively with school board issues and discussions. Other sectors such as social services, health care, and municipalities also have committees with dedicated staff and campaigns. The division’s task is to coordinate all sectors in political and lobbying actions involving over 300 locals.

The OSBCC allows education workers from across the province to share information and strategies for bargaining and to discuss issues and policies of concern. With over 100 CUPE locals organized into 17 regions, this committee helps locals in their fight against contracting out and to defend public education in the face of cutbacks to education spending.

OSBCC representatives are elected in 17 areas of the province. These include representatives for health & safety and injured workers as well as CUPE-Ontario division executives. They meet every month via teleconferences or face to face. The OSBCC publishes a bi-monthly newsletter to keep you informed and

now has the mandate to bargain centrally with the Ministry of Education.

CUPE leads in bargaining wages for ECEs

CUPE, which has been organizing workers for nearly 50 years, has always been a leader in representing school board workers in Ontario. Some of the changes observed recently in English schools are the addition of child care facilities to handle the growing number of young children; French school boards have had integrated child care in their schools since 1998. Most CUPE collective agreements have language that automatically extends representation rights and working conditions to new job classifications such as ECEs.

Our success is shown by the fact that we now represent 600 ECEs in over 20 school boards in Ontario.

They include:

Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic DSB, Bruce-Grey Catholic DSB, Conseil scolaire de district catholique du Sud-Ouest, Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario, Eastern Ontario Catholic DSB, Halton Catholic DSB, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic DSB, Hastings and Prince Edward DSB, Huron Superior Catholic DSB, Huron-Perth Catholic DSB, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB, Lambton Kent DSB, Limestone DSB, London Catholic DSB, Northwest Catholic DSB, Ottawa Catholic DSB, Peterborough, Victoria, Norththumberland & Clarington Catholic DSB, St. Clair Catholic DSB, Thames Valley DSB, Toronto DSB, Upper Canada DSB, and Windsor-Essex Catholic DSB.

We are currently defending CUPE representation language for ECEs working in Niagara, York and Waterloo Catholic DSBs at the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB).



How does CUPE benefit ECEs?

ECEs who are CUPE members earn better wages and have superior working conditions, support, training opportunities and representation.

We have led the discussions for a Provincial Framework Agreement (PFA) to include recognition of ECEs' experiences with previous employers and an enhanced wage grid. That is why CUPE's ECEs received pay grid adjustments from the beginning, with another at the start of each new school year.

Over the past year and a half, CUPE has worked hard to complete collective agreements for its ECEs which include salary improvements negotiated at the PDT. From now on, as new groups of ECEs enter schools already represented by CUPE, they will automatically receive the benefits and pay increase negotiated by CUPE.

Access to Employment Insurance for ECEs on layoff

CUPE ECEs are entitled to Employment Insurance (EI) when on layoff in December, March and during the summer months. During the first layoff period in December 2010, some ECEs were denied EI. CUPE represented these members through the EI appeals process, insuring their right to collect EI. CUPE's position was accepted unanimously. The Board concluded "*...that the claimant was not a teacher within the meaning and definition of the Employment Insurance Act and Regulations, and therefore is entitled to benefits during the non-teaching periods...*"

CUPE, through its National Office in Ottawa, started meeting with EI officials to ensure this issue would not repeat itself during future layoff periods. As a result, there have been very few problems for ECEs during the summer layoff. For the few individual members who have had a problem relating to this issue, we continue to represent them on a case by case basis.

We will continue to work with the Commissioner for Workers at the Employment Insurance Commission in Ottawa to find a resolution to the issue which is system-wide.

Representation of ECEs at the 2011 OSBCC Conference

Last February, a group representing ECEs participated in the OSBCC’s conference and got an opportunity to bring their issues forward in one of the workshops. Two motions were passed by the delegates and are now part of the action plan for this year’s OSBCC. The theme of the conference was “Together, everything is possible,” which signals the focus of our work leading up to a new round of provincial discussions in 2012.

OLRB appeals, a long process

We are vigorously arguing that existing contract language negotiated between CUPE and the York, Niagara and Waterloo Catholic DSBs extend bargaining rights to ECEs. The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) is challenging that right in three separate appeals. The issue will be decided at the OLRB. The Niagara case was completed on December 12, 2011 and we are waiting for the OLRB’s

decision. York Region DSB and Waterloo Catholic DSB are ongoing. This is a long process but we will keep you posted.

Looking forward

We commit to working hard to promote with the public, school boards and the province the benefits of the full day/full year model of early learning as originally promised by the government. When we achieve this goal, children will have a richer learning experience, parents will have daily interaction with those who are working with their children and ECEs will have full time/year round employment with good working conditions, benefits and pensions.

CUPE will continue to represent their ECEs, even if problems develop between them and the teacher with whom they are partnered. We will also work to ensure principals and other staff understand the vital role ECEs play in the delivery of the program. We will ensure your work is given the respect it deserves.

Your voices will be heard and your opinions about how the program could be improved will be acted on. As an important part of CUPE Ontario's school board sector, you matter!