

Thousands of CUPE members take to the streets

Thousands of CUPE members from across the province converged on the Liberal leadership convention in Toronto on January 26 for one of the largest labour rallies in the province's history.

A massive crowd of 30,000 marched on the convention, calling for an end to attacks on collective bargaining rights, such as Bill 115.

"These are democratic rights. You can't just take them away with the stroke of a pen," said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn. "Any leader who tries to strip these rights from us will learn that we will fight them with everything we have."

Many CUPE members were up well before the sun, making the trek from Windsor, London, Ottawa, Cornwall, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay and almost every community in between.

"When people are getting on a bus at three o'clock on a Saturday morning to go and march – in January – you know that they're deeply concerned," said Carrie Withers,

president of CUPE Local 4685 in Sault Ste. Marie. "Our rights are part of our identity as Ontarians, and we can't let any government take them away."

"We are going to campaign until we receive assurance from all provincial leaders that they will not attack our basic bargaining and arbitration rights in the future."



CUPE Ontario dogged Liberal leadership candidates at debates in Ingersoll, Thunder Bay, Oshawa and Toronto before the leadership vote. Many inside the hall said the huge demonstration affected the outcome.

At the rally, we were clear that our fight was not just about Bill 115, but is about a continuing fight to protect the collective bargaining rights that bring benefits all Ontarians—benefits such as parental leave, health and safety regulations and the minimum wage.

"Bill 115 created a crisis and continues to do so, and it is disingenuous to use it to impose or threaten to impose contracts, then try to make amends by repealing it after the damage has been done." He added,

The Liberals had threatened a bill that would strip workers across the broader public sector of their right to strike and which would attack the independent arbitration system relied on by essential workers, such as CUPE health care members.

CUPE Ontario is urging the new government to chart a new course, one that respects workers' rights to collective bargaining and independent arbitration, and which abandons the Liberals' failed austerity agenda in favour of investment in public services and social infrastructure.

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CUPE Ontario takes bargaining rights fight to the air



Our fight to defend workers' rights to free collective bargaining and fair, independent contract arbitration did not end with the repeal of Bill 115 in January.

In January, we went to air with a new television advertisement designed to promote the benefits of collective bargaining for all Ontarians. Polling shows that people support unions and the right to collective bargaining. Our ads sought to build a link between those rights and

the benefits enjoyed not only by union members, but by all Ontarians.

The ads aired on every major network in Ontario, on specialty channels such as HGTV, and during online broadcasts of shows on CBC and other major television websites.

"So many good things that we all need start at the bargaining table," the spot begins. "A decent living, time for our children, our parents, a safe place to work, a future to look forward to. When workers and employers negotiate fair contracts, they set standards that improve both union and non-union workplaces and help all Ontario families keep up. We can't let any government take collective bargaining rights away."

The television ads were followed by two weeks of similar radio ads to reinforce the message during the Liberal leadership race and leading into budget season.

To view the ad, visit cupe.on.ca/BargainingWorks

Leonard Peltier: 20 years too many

CUPE Ontario's Aboriginal Council marked the 20th anniversary of Leonard Peltier's political imprisonment by participating in the annual prayer vigil and feast held at OISE in Toronto.

From the Turtle Mountain Chippewa band, Peltier was active in the American Indian Movement and was assisting the Oglala Lakota people on Pine Ridge Reservation at the time of a tragic shoot-out resulting in the death of two FBI agents. Peltier fled to Canada and was imprisoned in the United States after wrongful extradition in 1976.

As union members, we hold civil and human rights at the core of our beliefs. This year, Peltier and CUPE Ontario added their voices to those supporting the grassroots Idle No More movement.

"With personal knowledge I totally understand the difficulties of getting people to take action to bring about change," Peltier wrote. "The direction that the world corporations have taken historically and today have largely been at the expense of the Indigenous People around the world."

To learn more, visit leonardpeltier.net.



Defending union rights, one member at a time

Throughout the fall and winter, CUPE members provincewide mobilized to defend collective bargaining rights, and mounted an impressive response to attacks including the recently repealed Bill 115.

The first phase of our Collective Bargaining Works campaign gave all our leaders and the public a greater understanding of why collective bargaining is important, but now it's time to build on that foundation.

The action plan passed on October 18 by more than 1300 CUPE Local leaders called for member mobilization, and we are launching this phase to continue building our union's strength.

We already saw Ontario's Liberal government strip education workers of their collective bargaining rights. Now their sights are set on the independent third-party contract arbitration for CUPE members who do not have the right to strike—like our members working in the health care sector.

Provincial and federal Conservatives are proposing major changes to labour laws that would allow employers to effectively strip our ability to bargain collectively by eliminating the union's ability to collect dues.

The second phase of our campaign is a massive endeavour to alert every single member, through face-to-face conversations, about the value of unionism and the threats to our union rights.

The objective is to win the active support of our membership and to organize a visible and powerful move-

ment for change: public investments in public services, not cuts; free collective bargaining to defend the working conditions of our members, not contract concessions; a strong and democratic union, not laws intended to weaken us and allow government interference in our internal affairs.

We are preparing training programs and materials so that every local can start the work at the base, speaking one-on-one with members about what is going on in Ontario. Every local will be invited to take part in training sessions so that the work can begin as soon as possible. We will also be convening telephone conference calls of local presidents to discuss the next phase of our mobilization.

For more information, visit BargainingWorks.ca

What we need all CUPE members to know:

- 1. Collective Bargaining works. The gains made through bargaining by CUPE and other unions continue to benefit all Canadians.***
- 2. Your right to share in the benefits of free collective bargaining as exercised through your union is being threatened by Liberal and Conservative legislation.***
- 3. You can help protect your rights by getting involved in your union.***



**Collective
bargaining
works
for everyone**



Budget 2013: Two million Ontarians waiting to get off wait lists, out of poverty

The last provincial budget left two million Ontarians on wait lists for vital public services, or living in poverty as a result of criminally low social assistance and stagnant minimum wage rates. Ontario's next budget must address this growing inequality by generating revenue and re-investing to stimulate growth, CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn told the provincial finance committee during pre-budget consultations in March.

"Last year's budget left two million people on waitlists for crucial public services like long-term care, child care and affordable housing; trapped in a cycle of poverty with social assistance rates lower than they were before Mike Harris, with growing ranks of working poor stuck with a stagnant minimum wage," said Hahn. "Austerity has failed Ontarians. If Premier Wynne truly wants to make Ontario number one for growth, she must chart a new course; invest in public services and social infrastructure."

There are also thousands more families across Ontario searching for licensed child care, First Nations waiting for liveable housing and safe water, women and racialized Ontarians waiting for pay and employment equity, commuters waiting for public transit. And this isn't new. Hundreds of thousands of Ontarians have been waiting for years to see positive change for them and their families.

"The Liberals were quick to cut taxes for corporations, but have been very slow to tackle poverty and inequality," said Hahn. "If continued, the last government's austerity agenda will cut the GDP by 3%,

pull \$20 billion out of the economy and cost Ontarians 100,000 jobs. That's bad for everyone."

Income inequality

The World Economic Forum cites rising inequality, not deficits, as the greatest threat to the global economy in 2013.

The growth of inequality in Ontario has been stark. The richest 1 percent of Ontarians have nearly doubled

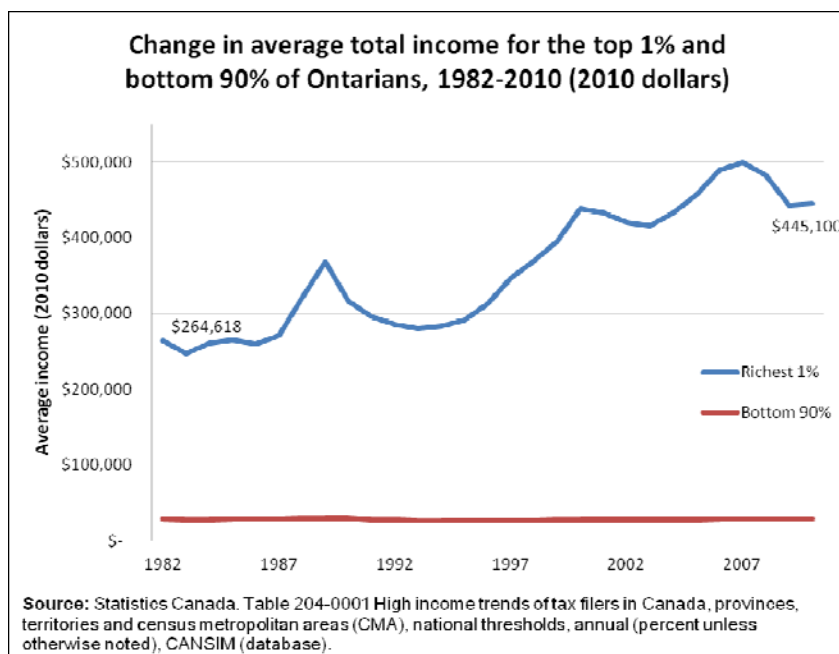
their incomes over the past 20 years, but the bottom 90 percent have seen their incomes stagnate.

In Ontario, consumer spending is maxed out, the housing market is cooling, corporations are not investing despite sitting on \$600 billion in cash, and

government spending cuts are set to reduce economic growth by 3 percent over the next two years.

The Ontario government's austerity budgets have made this province the most unequal in Canada, after Alberta. This is in part because we now spend less than any other province on critical government services like hospitals. Wealth is more concentrated than at any time since the Second World War.

The inequality is starkest for Aboriginal and racialized workers who earn just 70 and 81.4 cents, respectively, for every dollar paid to non-aboriginal/non-racialized Canadian workers. The number of Ontarians living in poverty has climbed 75 percent since 1989.



A progressive way to growth

Premier Kathleen Wynne said she wants to make Ontario “#1 for economic growth.” That is possible, but not unless the government is willing to admit the failures of the past and try something new.

CUPE Ontario’s pre-budget submission focuses on tax fairness and making investments in public services and social infrastructure as a way to stimulate growth and reduce inequality. Our submission details concrete ways the government can help the people of Ontario.

Some of the recommendations include:

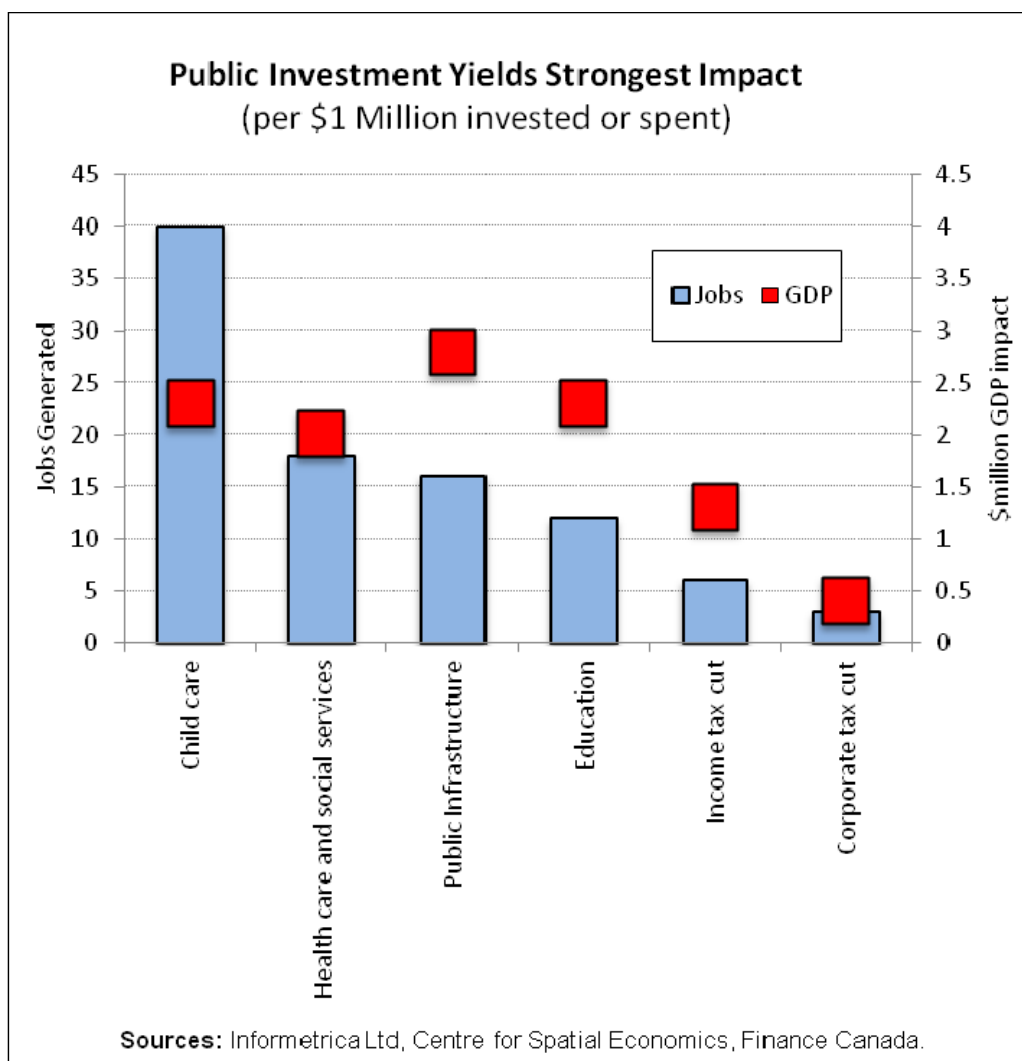
- Restore revenue from recent corporate tax cuts, introduce a financial transactions tax, close tax loopholes
- Raise social assistance to pre-1996 levels and raise minimum wage
- Fund hospitals for real cost increases of 5.8% a year
- Fund minimum care standard for residents of long-term care homes
- Raise minimum standards for PSW wages in home care and establish minimum work week
- Increase child care funding by \$300 million to prevent closures
- Increase funding for community social services by \$67 million
- Continue upload of municipal services and restore 70/30 transit ratio
- Housing strategy to deal with need for 750,000 homes
- Adequately fund transition to full-day kindergarten,

restore School Operations Grant and Special Education Grant

- Stop contracting out and wasting money on costly public-private partnerships

Together with respecting collective bargaining rights and a fair, independent arbitration process, CUPE Ontario is calling on the government to reject austerity and instead invest in growth and equality.

To read the brief, visit cupe.on.ca/a5561/Pre-Budget-Submission-Final.pdf



Fires are burning, we are rising

Thousands of women filled Yonge Street in Toronto in a kilometre-long march for International Women's Day on March 8.

A huge CUPE contingent including President Fred Hahn and Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick marched behind our "Solidarity Against Austerity" banner,

recognizing the huge effect government cutbacks are having on women.

Fifty years ago our Union was formed because of the inequality faced by public-sector workers.

The majority of CUPE members are women and many work in jobs that are

traditionally female-dominated, where wage inequality is often at its most extreme. For many years, women's equality has been at the core of CUPE Ontario's values.

With women's organizations and the labour movement together, we have started to address the many barriers that have existed for decades—including are the passing of pay equity legislation and the implementation and ongoing improvement to parental leave. It was through collective bargaining that unions were able to make changes for all women in our province.

But we have a long way to go. In Ontario, women still earn less than men. Since the recession, women have filled the majority of new jobs created in the province, but the wage gap remains. This difference has a larger impact on younger women, immigrant women, Aboriginal women and women with disabilities; overall, women are disproportionately affected as they are the ones who fill part-time, casual and precarious jobs.



Bustin' a move for pay equity

CUPE social service workers busted a move on Saturday, March 23 at Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto. The “get out the red” dance action supported the Ontario Equal Pay Coalition’s campaign, Take Action to Close the Gender Pay Gap, and their call for Ontario’s first annual Equal Pay Day on April 9.

Participants included members and local leaders attending CUPE Ontario’s Social Service Workers’ Coordinating Committee (SSWCC) conference, as well as sector leaders and CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn.

Child care, child welfare, developmental services and community agency staff who work in “female dominated” jobs are directly affected by wage inequality in Ontario. They say they’ve had enough lip service to pay equity and want Ontario’s new premier to take action in closing the pay gap between men and women.

Ontario women are “in the red” because they earn 28 percent less than men for work of equal value. The pay gap is even bigger for racialized women, women with disabilities and Aboriginal women.

The goal of pay equity, also known as equal pay for work of equal value, is to stop discrimination related to the under-valuation of work traditionally performed by women. The province is supposed to fund social service agencies to maintain pay equity.

“But the provincial underfunding of social services often results in agencies being forced to decide between meeting their obligations to equity and maintaining valuable services and supports for Ontarians who rely on them,” said Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam, an Ottawa municipal social assistance worker and SSWCC chair. “We say Ontario’s new premier — a woman — should take immediate action to lessen wage inequality.”



Diamond Jubilee



Sister Joanne Webb, CUPE Ontario DVP First Nations, was honoured earlier this year with the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal for her ongoing work as an activist and advocate of Aboriginal rights.

Diversity DVP

Sworn in at the March executive board meeting, Patrick Hannon became CUPE Ontario’s first Diversity Vice-President, LGBTQ.

Hannon is a Windsor municipal worker and serves as Sergeant-at-Arms on the executive of Local 543.

CUPE Ontario will hold its first elections for the new position at our 50th Convention, May 28-June 1 in Toronto.



Celebrate 50 years of building a better Ontario

CUPE Ontario will celebrate its 50th annual Convention May 29 through June 1 at the Sheraton Toronto Centre Hotel.

With our collective bargaining and contract arbitration rights under attack, increasing austerity measures in the coming budget and a provincial by-elections on the horizon, CUPE Ontario needs to develop a strong and active union membership to build and fight back.

While we emphasize building for the future, we will also take a look back at the challenges we have overcome and successes we have achieved over the last 50 years — equal pay for women, the hospital strike, the Rae Days and the Days of Action. By learning from our past, we shall find ways for workers to triumph in the future.

But this Convention will not just be about celebrating history, it will be about making history. We will hold our first elections for a Diversity Vice-President, LGBTQ,



a new position members voted to add to the provincial executive board at the last Convention. You can also contribute to a time capsule for future CUPE members to discover.

Take note that Convention begins at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, May 29, and check Facebook and cupe.on.ca/Convention2013 for regular updates.



facebook.com/CUPEOntario

Join us online!



twitter.com/CUPEOntario



youtube.com/CUPEOntario

Upcoming Events

Ontario Library Workers' Conference

Apr. 2 to 3 – Crowne Plaza Hotel, Niagara Falls

OMECC Conference

Apr. 3 to 6 – Crowne Plaza Hotel, Niagara Falls

CUPE Ontario 50th Anniversary Convention

May 28 to June 1 – Toronto Sheraton Centre

CACO Conference

Sep. 23 to 24—Delta Ottawa

HCWCC Conference

Sep. 25 to 28—Delta Ottawa

CUPE 26th National Convention

Oct. 19 to 26—Quebec City

CUPE Ontario Fall School

Oct. 29 to Nov. 3 – Toronto Sheraton Centre

Get up-to-date news affecting you every day at:
www.cupe.on.ca