

Standing for fairness on the picket line

This fall, CUPE Ontario members in Bonfield, Toronto and Windsor took strong stands for fairness and against deep concessions.

“Our sisters and brothers in Bonfield and at Ryerson are on the picket lines today because they believe that fairness means protecting the rights of future generations,” said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn. “We are proud of their brave stand against contracting out and against two-tiered contracts and will stand with them as long as it takes to get fair contracts.”

In Bonfield, 16 municipal workers, members of Local 4616, were forced into a defensive strike on August 1 by an employer demanding deep concessions and the ability to contract out work. Together with community and labour allies, CUPE Ontario organized multiple rallies, including one on September 12 that drew a crowd of hundreds from across the province, including OFL President Sid Ryan, the presidents of ETFO and OSSTF and leaders from Unifor, Steelworkers and several other unions.

Municipal locals are taking turns adopting the picket line for a day, sending support and bolstering the spirit of the striking workers. Locals from all sectors have shown tremendous solidarity and provided more than \$60,000 in donations.

At Ryerson University in Toronto, two members of Local 1281 were locked out September 30 by their employer, the Continuing Education Students’ Association of Ryerson (CESAR). Among the concessions demanded by the employer is a 10 percent cut to wages of future employees, making this an important fight against two-tiered contracts.

CUPE Ontario members are participating in rallies, information pickets and classroom talks, signing on to an ongoing email campaign (local1281.cupevotes.ca) targeting the CESAR executive, who are increasingly isolated on campus.



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We encourage members to join the 4616 and 1281 picket lines. Hours and locations are posted at cupe.on.ca

On September 8, members of Local 1393 at the University of Windsor went on strike to protect job security and seniority rights. CUPE Ontario joined members on the picket lines and sponsored events to build solidarity on campus, including a barbeque that attracted several thousand students and faculty. The university returned to the table and a new agreement was ratified in early October that protected important job security and seniority rights.

"Employers like the mayor of Bonfield think they'll break the union and set a precedent, but we know something they clearly don't: CUPE Ontario members are deeply committed to fairness and we're not afraid of cold days on a picket line," said CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick. "We'll stand together, one day longer, one day stronger. We showed them in Windsor and we'll show them in Bonfield and at Ryerson that CUPE members will stand together and won't back down in our pursuit of fairness."

CUPE Ontario members go to Queen's Park



On Monday, November 18, more than 30 CUPE Ontario members representing all sectors visited Queen's Park for meetings with MPPs as part of the first ever CUPE Ontario Lobby Day.

The meetings raised MPP awareness about our union and the work our members do, as well as the effects of budget cuts on the front-line services we provide. It is an important way that CUPE Ontario members open communication with MPPs and put a human face on public services.

New videos for your toolkit

Collective bargaining works for everyone. As the Stand Up for Fairness initiative moves from communicator training to grassroots conversations, more and more CUPE members will be learning about the gains unions make for all workers.

But some conversations are harder to begin than others. How, for example, do you begin explaining a complex subject like interest arbitration or how good jobs benefit an entire community? CUPE Ontario produced a series of videos to help. Four videos are available at StandUpForFairness.ca. Share them on your websites, email them around, or use them to begin a discussion at a Local meeting.



CUPE Ontario members win national elections

Several CUPE Ontario leaders were elected to national executive positions at Convention in October.

Brother Fred Hahn was elected a general vice-president of CUPE National. Sister Candace Rennick and Brother Michael Hurley were elected regional vice-presidents for Ontario, Brother Henri Giroux was elected regional vice-president for Northern Ontario, and Sister Yolanda McClean was elected Diversity Vice-President.



CUPE Ontario members recognized at National convention

Two CUPE Ontario members were recognized for their remarkable activism at our 50th National Convention in October. Brother David Lamanna from Local 2 received the National Health and Safety Award, and Brother Ray Smith from Local 1750 received the National Disability Rights Activism Award.

Brother Lamanna is co-chair of Local 2's Joint Health and Safety Committee and told delegates that he was

"track safe" system to detect and protect workers at track level on subway and rail lines; and creating the "bonding assembly" allowing workers to safely work at track level without being electrocuted."

"Make sure you use it, and use it proudly," Brother Smith told delegates, pointing to the Disability Rights are Human Rights baggage tag that came in their delegate kits. Brother Smith was given the award for



From left: Gaetano Franco, David Lamanna, Fred Hahn and Candace Rennick



Ray Smith (left) and Paul Moist

advised to "be the change you want to see." Taking that advice to heart, the TTC signal technician began to develop products and procedures that directly enhance workers' health and safety.

His achievements include developing the "work area warning system" to alert transit operators that there are workers ahead so they can reduce vehicle speed or stop if required; working with Bombardier to develop a

work within Local 1750, his involvement with CUPE Ontario's Workers with Disabilities Committee, and for his work with the Persons with Disabilities National Working Group, including his efforts to launch the A Solidarity of Abilities campaign nationally.

CUPE Ontario congratulates Brothers Lamanna and Smith. Their hard work and dedication made CUPE Ontario members proud.

Raise the Rates week of action



Hundreds of CUPE Ontario members and anti-poverty activists rallied outside the Ministry of Finance in Toronto on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

The rally was part of a week of action organized by Raise the Rates, a campaign supported by CUPE Ontario, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and several other groups. It calls on the Ontario government to raise social assistance rates by 55 percent, an amount that would restore them to where they were before the Mike Harris government's cuts.

The campaign also calls for restoration of the Community Start-Up and Housing Benefit, which was eliminated by the Liberal government last year, and to increase the minimum wage to \$14 an hour.

"It is inexcusable that poverty is growing in Ontario, and government policy is making a bad situation worse," said Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam, chair of CUPE Ontario's Social Service Workers' Coordinating Committee.

The rally was a highlight of a week of action that included rallies in Toronto, Kitchener/Waterloo, Kingston, Belleville and the largest-ever anti-poverty rally in Sudbury. Find out more at cupe.on.ca/RaiseTheRates

Upcoming Events

RPN Conference 2014 - Jan. 20 to 22, 2014
The Marriott Toronto Bloor Yorkville, Toronto

CUPE Ontario's First Ever Secretary-Treasurers' Conference - Jan. 22 to 25, 2014 - Sheraton Parkway North, Richmond Hill

School Board Workers Conference - Feb. 4 to 8, 2014 - Crowne Plaza/Sheraton on the Falls, Niagara Falls

Racial Justice and Human Rights Conference - Feb. 10 to 13, 2014 - Sheraton Parkway Toronto North, 600 Highway 7 East, Richmond

University Workers 2014 Conference - Feb. 20 to 24, 2014 - Crowne Plaza Niagara Falls



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Celebrating 50 years of standing up for fairness



On Labour Day weekend, CUPE Ontario members participated in parades, barbeques and other events in communities across the province. The largest event was in Toronto, where thousands of members joined one of the largest Labour Day parades in our history.

Under the banner “50 Years of Standing Up for Fairness,” members in Thunder Bay, North Bay, Windsor, London, Ottawa, Hamilton and many more communities marched and staffed tables to help

celebrate our history and spread the message that the gains made by unions benefit all Ontarians.

“As a union, we have a 50-year history of standing up for equality and fairness,” said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn. “Many of the gains made at the bargaining table are now enjoyed widely in Ontario – things like parental leave, health and safety regulations and a minimum wage.”



Fighting service cuts to vulnerable children



After rallying the community and lobbying the provincial government to stand up for fairness for at-risk children and youth in Hamilton, workers from the Hamilton Children's Aid Society (CAS) successfully stopped five scheduled shutdown days.

The Hamilton CAS had planned to close and cancel services provided by 249 CUPE members once a month because of provincial underfunding. Because of the campaign, the provincial government decided to provide additional transitional funding of up to one million dollars.

"We are very happy that our agency will remain open for our community's at-risk children and youth," said Samantha Florento, president of CUPE 3899. Hamilton CAS cut 70 positions in May, causing the closure of the medical dental clinic, two programs that help keep at-risk families stay united, and eliminating other support services.



"These shutdowns and layoffs are the tip of the iceberg and we anticipate other CAS agencies facing similar deficits will be forced to cut services to balance their budgets," said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn at the rally. "While we are encouraged that the Liberal government provided transitional funding to the Hamilton CAS, there are other agencies across Ontario that need similar and proper funding."

CUPE Ontario members brought their fight to Queen's Park on National Child Day, November 20. Members lobbied all three political parties to stop the cuts.

Peterborough Pride



Despite a cold, rainy day, CUPE Ontario members came out in droves to Peterborough Pride in September.

Joined by President Fred Hahn and Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick, our members formed the largest contingent in the parade and made a proud statement to Peterborough that we stand up for fairness for LGBTQ workers.

The event capped a busy summer, which saw CUPE Ontario members participate in more than 14 Pride events province-wide.

A fair minimum wage

A full-time worker earning minimum wage in Ontario has an income 21 percent below the poverty line. It's time to raise the minimum wage and index it to inflation so vulnerable workers don't fall further behind, CUPE Ontario told a provincial minimum wage advisory panel in October.

"Ontario hasn't raised the minimum wage since 2010, while most other provinces have. It needs to be raised above the poverty line to \$14 an hour," CUPE Ontario University Workers' Coordinating Committee Chair Janice Folk-Dawson told a hearing in Guelph.

"Raising the minimum wage isn't just good for low-wage earners, it's good for the economy," she said.

"History shows that raising the minimum wage creates an economic boost and creates jobs."



The current minimum wage is \$10.25. Since the last increase, inflation has reduced the purchasing power of those wages by 7 percent. About 534,000 Ontarians work for minimum wage, and women, young workers, racialized workers, workers with disabilities and new immigrants are disproportionately represented in this wage group.

You can download a complete copy of CUPE Ontario's report, "Towards a Living Wage" by visiting cupe.on.ca/2013wagesubmission.

Niagara Family Day in the Park

On September 7, President Fred Hahn joined CUPE Ontario members and families from the Niagara Region in Welland for the 3rd annual CUPE Niagara Family Day in the Park.

Organized by the CUPE Niagara District Council, the event featured a free barbeque, live music and bouncy castles.

Wearing T-shirts that read "Ask me what I do for you," the event put a human face on public service and highlighted how CUPE members are a vital part of their community.

"This has been a fantastic event. There are members here I haven't seen before, so the message must have gotten out," said CUPE Niagara District Council President Susan Schmidt. "There are lots of younger workers here with their kids."



A year-end message from CUPE Ontario

To all the CUPE Leaders, Activists and Members, all across Ontario, let us start by saying Thank You!

Thank you for Standing Up for Fairness every day. Thanks for your strength and dedication. By fighting for fairness in your workplaces and in our communities, you, and others like you, are precisely what make CUPE Ontario strong.

The last year saw us overcome many challenges and undoubtedly, the year ahead will present new ones. But, in CUPE, we rely on our collective commitment to fairness and equality to continue to see us through.

Our desire to make life better, not only for our members in their workplaces, but also for our neighbours, friends and family in our communities, remains firm. After all, that's what unions like CUPE have always done—make life better for everyone.

It's a shame not everyone sees this simple truth. In the year ahead, conservatives will try to strip unions of our political strength. They fundamentally believe that the wealthiest people—the corporate bosses—should be able to get more and more. And Liberals will hold firm on their refusal to fund public services and create jobs. They simply don't care that working people are struggling to get by, and that poverty is increasing in Ontario.

We know better.

We know that the only way to build a healthy, stable society is to end poverty. We know that a strong economy is not built with lavish corporate bonuses for the rich, but good wages and benefits for the rest of us.

We know that good, defined-benefit pensions provide dignity in old age and the retirement security Ontarians need and deserve. We know that Ontarians want a fair and balanced society, one in which there is equality and equity for women, racialized workers, workers with disabilities, aboriginal workers and the LGBTQ communities.

And we know people continue to want their children to do better than they have done, ensuring our young people will not be the first generation in history to reverse this trend.

And just how will we do all of this? Together!

We are so glad you are part of our CUPE Ontario family. At a time of year when many of us turn our thoughts toward friends and family, we extend warm wishes from your CUPE Ontario Family.

It is our sincere hope that you'll enjoy some relaxation, good cheer, and time with your friends and loved ones over the holidays. In CUPE Ontario, we look forward to a new year of working with you to defend our rights, build our communities and stand up for fairness for all people.

Fred Hahn,
President

Candace Rennick,
Secretary-Treasurer



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