

Sisters standing up for fairness

Thousands of women and allies packed the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the International Women's Day rally in Toronto on March 8, afterwards pouring out onto Bloor Street and marched down Yonge Street to Ryerson University.

At events in Toronto, Waterloo and Sudbury, thousands of women wore CUPE Ontario's "Sisters Standing Up for Fairness" scarves.

"We have worked for more than 50 years side by side with women's organizations and other unions to advance women's equality. The inequality faced by women working in the public sector was a driving force behind our union's formation, and the struggle for

women's rights is at the heart of CUPE Ontario," said CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Renick, who attended "The Feminist Games," an International Women's Day event in Ottawa.

Members in Kitchener/Waterloo held "Rising Together," the city's first International Women's Day celebration brunch.

"We continue to fight for—and win—changes that benefit all

women. Pay equity, ending two-tiered contracts, paid parental leave and protection from harassment and unsafe work are just a few," said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn.

Find out more about International Women's Day and the many events CUPE Ontario participates in to promote equality by visiting

cupe.on.ca. Also watch our website for information about our biennial Women's Conference, in Fall 2014.



In Toronto the "Women Taking Power" rally and march had a strong focus on the importance of quality public and non-profit child care.



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Municipal Affairs minister intervenes in Bonfield strike

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing expressed concern about “serious” allegations the Township of Bonfield is not complying with the Municipal Act. In a letter on March 25, the Minister gave Bonfield’s mayor two weeks to respond to concerns raised by CUPE and 69 ratepayers who contacted her ministry.

Members of CUPE Local 4616 went on strike August 1, fighting a long list of concessionary demands including attacks on seniority, job security and the threat of contracting out.

“The mayor and councillors have tried to run the affairs of the township on their own, but failed,” said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn. “There is a looming crisis because of their refusal to settle the labour dispute and get people back to work. Now they must answer for their actions and be held accountable.”

The minister’s letter outlines 11 specific issues about which the township council must report back on.



Among these are confirmation of any new debt taken on since August 1, and assurances that payments to school boards and the social services board are up to date. She also requested explanations surrounding budget preparations and procurement policies, confirmation the township is meeting its duties around emergency preparedness, building permits, the lack of audited financial statements and cemetery burials.

The mayor continues to refuse to negotiate a fair collective

agreement. Labour Board hearings into unfair labour practices are scheduled between June and August.

“This is an important stand against concessions and contracting out,” said CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick. “Our brave sisters and brothers in Bonfield need every local’s support to win this fight—One day longer, one day stronger.”

For information about the strike and how to donate, visit cupe.on.ca

Bargain to settle, prepare to strike: Local 1 success story

Member mobilization is at the heart of any successful campaign to fight back concessions and make gains at the bargaining table. CUPE Local 1 demonstrated this in their successful negotiations with their employer, Toronto Hydro.

The local adopted the motto “Bargain to Settle, Prepare to Strike.”

On the heels of a strong, 99.25 percent strike mandate, the strike committee went out and recruited the equivalent of 10 percent of members to be picket captains and rovers in the event of a strike.

The young committee—three activists, the oldest 31—recruited, trained and inspired a new generation of activists within their local.

They prepared in advance, ordering signs and generators, talking with police, and even renting a trailer with a big sign reading “CUPE Local One Strike Headquarters” a week before the strike deadline.

It would have been difficult for the employer not to notice that trailer and the message it sent set up across from their office.

Meanwhile, the bargaining team was at the table armed with

knowledge that the local was strong and prepared. And with that, they were able to successfully negotiate an agreement that not only pushed back a lengthy list of concessions, but also makes wage improvements in all four years of their agreements.

Now the local has a solid collective agreement and a new generation of activists. And that preparedness will only become more important as the bargaining climate gets more challenging and more workers have to take strong stands for fairness and to protect future generations of workers.

Pushed out of hospital, abandoned at home



Two decades of cuts to Ontario hospitals, including the closure of 19,000 beds and decreased access to in-hospital restorative convalescent care, is resulting in human tragedies on a grand scale, according to a new report making headlines across the province.

“Pushed out of hospital, abandoned at home” chronicles the personal stories of hundreds of patients who called a patient hotline set up for more than a year by the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (OSLA) and the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU).

“Many of the patient experiences are heart-breaking,” said OCHU President Michael Hurley. “It is the frail, ill,

mostly elderly patients who have borne the brunt of the cuts to the hospital system. They have been pushed out of hospital while acutely ill and have been abandoned at home. Some have died as a result.”

Health ministry data back up these patient stories. One in six Ontario patients are readmitted to hospital within 30 days of being discharged. More than 10,000 mostly frail and elderly people are on wait lists for home care and 35,000 on wait lists for long-term care beds. National data shows Ontario patients

receive 6.1 fewer hours of nursing care than patients in other provinces.

Since moving to an outpatient community care model, most therapy services have seen decreased referral rates, leading to patients not receiving timely care.

“What we heard is this: If you have dementia; if you’ve suffered a severe stroke; if you have Parkinson’s disease; or if you have any kind of swallowing issue, chances are good that you are not going to get the appropriate care in a timely fashion,” said OSLA’s Mary Cook.

You can download a copy of the complete report from the Health Care sector page at cupe.on.ca.

National Day of Action for a New Health Accord

Thousands of CUPE members participated in rallies and events across Canada on March 31, the National Day of Action for a New Health Accord.

The Day of Action marked the expiry of a ten-year agreement between the federal, provincial and territorial governments that provided stable federal funding and national standards for health care.

CUPE Ontario members helped organize and participated in events in dozens of communities across the

province, including the Honk for Health Care rally at Queen’s Park and a rally outside MP Jay Aspin’s office in North Bay.



“The Harper government is doing all that it thinks it can get away with to undermine public Medicare in Canada,” said Ontario Health Coalition Director Natalie Mehra at the Toronto rally.

Defending long-term care in Sault Ste. Marie

CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick joined staff and the families of residents at FJ Davey Home in Sault Ste. Marie on April 2, calling on MPP David Oraziotti to intervene and stop cuts at the nursing home.

Hours of nursing and personal care have been cut, meaning personal support workers (PSWs) have less time to bathe, toilet, clothe interact with residents and respond to their needs when they call. It means nursing staff will have a harder time dispensing medication and ensuring timely and accurate medical care. Already rushed, dietary aides will have to speed up even more to get food out to residents.



Environmental (cleaning) services have also been reduced, a serious concern in long-term care, where fragile residents are prone to infection.

“With these cuts to nursing and personal care, we are back to 1990 levels,” said Rennick. “That’s a time when residents were mobile, were younger going into nursing homes and had less complex medical care needs. Today residents are over 80 and most have some form of cognitive impairment, like dementia. The care needs of residents are higher.”

Workers and families of residents at the home called on Oraziotti to “take swift action” to secure better funding so the cuts to care and staffing are rescinded. Workers at the home, members of CUPE 4685, followed the press conference with a Saturday information picket, where they were joined by residents concerned about cuts to care.

The residents and workers will continue fighting the cuts and are planning a pre-budget rally in late-April at Oraziotti’s office.

“Stop the war on the poor”

Hundreds of CUPE Ontario members and allies in the Raise the Rates campaign marched on the provincial Liberal convention in Toronto, demanding an end to “the war on the poor.”

“After 11 years in power, the Liberals have not addressed the serious and growing problem of poverty in Ontario,” CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn said when the rally reached the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

“They have maintained huge tax cuts for corporations by continuously lowering the standard of living for the poorest people in the province,” he said. “Instead of part-time and casual jobs that pay minimum wages—which seems to be the PC plan—we need a government that will invest in public services and in social infrastructure to create good jobs, give people a path out of poverty and build a better Ontario for everyone.”



The Raise the Rates campaign is calling on the province to raise social assistance rates to restore the 55 percent loss in value since cuts made by Conservatives in 1995, to provide a \$14/hr minimum wage fully indexed to inflation, to fully restore the Special Diet and Community Start-Up benefits, and to commit to not merging Ontario Works and ODSP.

Racial Justice and Human Rights Conferences

More than 100 members participated in the first annual CUPE Ontario Racial Justice Conference in Richmond Hill on March 10.

The busy agenda included addresses by CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn, Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick and Diversity Vice-President, Racialized Workers, Veriline Howe. These speakers were followed by a panel including Gary Pieters from the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, Michael Kerr from Colour of Poverty and Paulette Senior from YWCA

Canada. The afternoon workshops focused on finding concrete actions to increase racial justice in the workplace, union and community.

The following day saw CUPE Ontario's biennial Human Rights Conference kick off. This three-day conference featured a panel discussion on equity moderated by Nora Loreto, involving CUPE Ontario's three diversity vice-presidents, Veriline Howe, Joanne Webb and Marlon Picken.

Day two included a "Success stories on advancing equality" workshop with Winnie Ng, Sam Gindin Chair in Social Justice and Democracy at Ryerson University, Ray Smith, CUPE National Disability Rights Activism

Award recipient, and Deena Ladd from the Workers' Action Centre.

The keynote speaker on day three was Aboriginal and Labour Activist Terri Monture from the Canadian Media Guild. The busy schedule also included many workshops and election caucus meetings.



Six CUPE Ontario committees were elected for two-year terms: Aboriginal Workers, International Solidarity, Racial Justice, Workers With Disabilities, Young Workers and Pink Triangle.

The next Racial Justice Conference is being planned for fall 2014 to coincide with the CUPE Ontario Women's Conference, and the next Human Rights Conference will be in fall 2015.



Standing up for pay equity

Developmental service workers held a “Picket for Pay Equity” in Guelph on April 4, demanding the provincial government enforce a pay equity order that corrects years of systemic, gender-based wage discrimination.

A month prior to the rally, CUPE Ontario members working at Community Living Guelph Wellington received an order from the province’s pay equity commission requiring the employer to pay both union and non-union workers wage adjustments and back pay covering the years 2010 to 2013.

But just after the order came, the employer agency’s director wrote in an open letter that “An order does not change the fact that we can’t make the Pay Equity adjustments within existing funding.”

However, the agency is required by law to make the payments without reducing staffing or services.

At the rally outside Guelph MPP Liz Sandals’ constitu-

ency office, members called on the province to step in and enforce the pay equity order, and also address the chronic underfunding that underlies the crisis.



The rally took place just days after a leaked government memo revealed that the province plans to add \$730 million in funding for developmental services to address the long wait lists for care.

“Revelations from this week’s leaked budget announcement make it clear there is ample funding to honour legal, legislated pay equity obligations for developmental service

workers,” said Joanne Smithers, representing CUPE Ontario’s Developmental Service Workers Coordinating Committee. “Therefore, we are demanding that the government order the agency to pay the award immediately, to the developmental service workers past and present whose work has been undervalued and underpaid these past four years.”

Equal Pay Day—April 16



Pay equity is the law in Ontario, but the latest data shows that women, on average, continue to earn 31 percent less than men. That’s 3 percent higher than last year.

Equal Pay Day is April 16 and CUPE Ontario is working with the Equal Pay Coalition to plan events in Ottawa, Kingston, London, Sudbury, Toronto and Windsor.

For information on Equal Pay Day events or to organize an event of your own, visit the Take Action section of cupe.on.ca and click on “Close the gap.”

Huge turnout for sector conferences

This winter, more than 1000 CUPE Ontario members participated in sector conferences. In school boards, social services, universities and municipalities, they planned the political and mobilizing actions that will strengthen their sectors, advance fairness and help build a better Ontario.

Each conference featured powerful messages from CUPE Ontario leaders, many practical workshops on bargaining, communications and political topics, and an inspiring lineup of guest speakers.

School board workers met in Niagara Falls, February 4-8, with guest speakers including activist Brigitte DePape. University workers also met in Niagara Falls two weeks later with an agenda that included a political panel with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), the Workers' Action Centre, and Ryerson University professor and *Alternate Routes* editor Carlo Fanelli.

Social service workers met in Ottawa, March 20-23 for a conference that included keynote addresses by Kathleen Monk from the Broadbent Institute, Jan

Borowy, a labour lawyer specialising in pay and employment equity law at Cavaluzzo Shilton McIntyre Cornish LLP, and NDP MP and Labour Critic, Alexandre Boulerice.



Library Workers spent two days together in March, preceding the municipal workers' conference in Richmond Hill. The agenda included American Library Association Past-President Mitch Freedman and a panel discussion featuring Local 4948 President Maureen O'Reilly, Local 905 library worker Guila Cukier, and CUPE researcher Simon Collins.

Municipal workers had a packed agenda that included addresses by Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath, Toronto mayoral candidate Olivia Chow, CUPE Regional Vice-President for Manitoba Mike Davidson, and Trish Hennessy from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Visit cupe.on.ca for information about upcoming conferences and events.

Stand up for fairness: Time to get involved

It's our union. We are responsible for the benefits we get working under a collective agreement and the benefits many other Canadians receive because unions have fought for them. Unfortunately, not all of our members know the good that comes from being part of our union and the legislative threats we face.

Stand up for fairness is our way of ensuring our locals have the plan and tools to keep members

engaged, to find out how they feel and make sure they know what's going on. Through one-on-one conversations between members we are sharing information, building stronger membership allegiance with our union and identifying new and enthusiastic activists.

Across Ontario, more than 600 locals have participated in local leadership training and more than 200 locals in communicator training.

Stand up for fairness provides the foundational tools locals, sectors and committees use to converse with members around negotiations, privatization, cutbacks and legislative threats.

With a provincial election likely this spring and municipal elections around the corner, it's time to make sure your local is involved.

For more information, visit standupforfairness.ca

Award & Convention deadlines fast approaching



Every year, CUPE Ontario recognizes three exceptional union activists. This is your opportunity to nominate someone who has made a real contribution for the Sisters in Solidarity Award, the Health & Safety Award or the Injured Workers Award.

Information and nomination forms are available at cupe.on.ca/convention2014. The deadline for submissions is April 24.

Convention begins at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, May 28 this year at Caesars Windsor Hotel, and runs through Saturday, May 31.

This year, Convention features an exciting lineup of guest speakers, a mass rally and elections for the CUPE Ontario Executive Board.

CUPE kids are also welcome, as Convention once again features an engaging Youth Camp. The last youth camp in Windsor featured visits to Ford's Dearborn assembly plant and the Detroit Institute of the Arts. Watch the Convention website for updates on this year's Convention and youth camp lineup.

Day of Mourning

April 28 is the National Day of Mourning for workers who have been killed or injured on the job. For more



information about the Day of Mourning and events taking place across the province, visit cupe.on.ca

Upcoming Events

CUPE Ontario Convention

May 28 to 31 – Caesars Windsor

Injured Workers Conference

Sept. 10 to 14 – Delta Sault Ste. Marie

Health Care Workers Conference

Sept. 16 to 19 – Delta Sault Ste. Marie

Ambulance Workers Conference

Sept. 22 to 23 – Caesars Windsor

National Sector Council Conference

Oct. 6 to 9 – Sheraton Centre Toronto



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