

Fighting for fairness, building a better Ontario

More than a thousand members from across the province gathered in Windsor for the 51st annual CUPE Ontario Convention, May 28-31.

Because of the timing, Convention speeches became election rallying cries for the labour movement.

“This could be the election of our lifetime,” CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn said, kicking off a series of speakers who warned delegates of the dangers of the Conservative agenda.

Speeches by CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick and CUPE National officers strengthened the message. Political strategist Kathleen Monk linked the anti-labour agenda in Ontario to the policies of Stephen Harper, and Coalition of Black Trade Unionists President Terry Melvin brought an international perspective in an electrifying speech.

The fight for fairness in Ontario is shared by all workers, he said. It is “a moral battle – that all should have good jobs... and an economy



that works for all of us, not just the rich and elites.”

On Friday, delegates and community activists marched en masse to the Detroit River for a Raise the Rates rally. We called on governments to fight poverty by restoring social assistance rates and raising the minimum wage.

It was a busy week, which included passing a strong action plan, elections for the CUPE Ontario executive

board, and the presentation of three awards.

Laurie Lucciola from Local 5555 was given the Sisters in Solidarity Award, Lina Naccarato from Local 1328 received the Injured Workers Award and Kim Monette from Local 4000 received the Health and Safety Award.

For more Convention stories and videos, visit convention.cupe.on.ca



INSIDE THE PULSE

CUPE 1764: Standing against concessions
Together we stopped Tim Hudak and his reckless agenda
CUPE Ontario celebrates World Pride

Page 2
Page 3
Page 5

Celebrating our work, our communities
Bonfield: Strength in solidarity
Brant CAS: Stop the shutdown

Page 6
Page 7
Page 8

CUPE 1764: Standing against concessions



When management in Durham Region brought a list of concession demands to the bargaining table, members of CUPE Local 1764 said “No.” On June 19, when the employer refused to back down on demands targeting sick leave for emergency medical services workers, CUPE members went on strike.

Local 1764 represents public health inspectors, child care workers, paramedics, and many other workers who provide vital municipal services. Although EMS workers cannot strike, sisters and brothers across the 1600-member local are walking the picket line, joined in solidarity by supporters from other CUPE locals.

“We’ve been forced to go on strike because management would not back off from their concession demands on a group of workers who save lives in our

community,” said Pauline Hopley, president of CUPE 1764.

CUPE Ontario has been actively supporting Local 1764 members. On June 23, the entire CUPE Ontario board and Pink Triangle Committee joined members on the picket line.

On June 25, hundreds of members participated in a solidarity rally outside the region offices in Whitby. More than a dozen CUPE locals participated, joined by representatives from Unifor and the Durham Region Labour Council. A huge cheer went up as public health nurses, members of ONA, walked out of the building carrying signs that read “Nurses support Durham municipal workers.”

“When members take a stand against concessions like this, we all need to be with them and show them what solidarity looks like,” said CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick.

A week later, members again converged on Whitby for another strong show of solidarity, together with CUPE National President Paul Moist.

CUPE Local 1764 is asking the employer to end the strike by sending outstanding issues to arbitration. For more information and to send an email to the Durham regional council, visit cupe.on.ca.



Together we stopped Tim Hudak and his reckless agenda

Tim Hudak's attacks on workers' rights and his threat to cut 100,000 public-sector jobs only served to motivate hundreds of CUPE Ontario members across the province to vote and to get involved in their local ridings during the provincial election.

CUPE Ontario ran a campaign to help prevent an anti-worker Conservative government from winning the election, and participated in the Ontario Federation of Labour's "Stop Hudak" efforts. These grassroots campaigns brought union members together in their communities to inform them of the threat posed by the Tory agenda, trained campaign volunteers and used telephone call-outs and social media to encourage members to get involved and to vote.

Particularly successful was an interactive map, created by CUPE Ontario using data from CUPE Economist Toby Sanger, showing how Tim Hudak's 100,000 job cuts would affect different communities.

"Ontario voters rejected Tim Hudak and his plan to gut and privatize public services and cut public-sector jobs," said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn. "But Labour's plans to Stop Hudak worked almost too well, landing us with a Liberal majority for the next four years. Kathleen Wynne campaigned as a 'progressive' who would invest in communities, but the Liberals have a long history of campaigning from the left and governing from the right. Our job now is to keep up the pressure to make sure the Liberals govern the way they said they would."

In the four years ahead, CUPE Ontario will push Wynne to make good on her promises, and will campaign vigorously to stop the cuts to vital public services that were included in the Liberal government's budget.

"I'm so proud of the work our members did during this election. We had more members active in more campaigns, in more communities, than ever before. And all of this increased activity came from the ground up, as our members got active in their local campaigns for NDP candidates and then asked for their union's support," Hahn said. "I am particularly proud of CUPE

members and staff who offered as NDP candidates in this election. Brother Henri Giroux, our 4th vice-president and CUPE National's Northern regional vice-president, increased the vote for the NDP in Nipissing, where Vic Fedeli, the Tory finance critic, saw his vote share drop significantly."



Hahn emphasized that our work is far from over. "Now we have stopped Hudak, we must turn our minds to the municipal and school board elections coming in October. Toronto is only one example of a city that needs a new mayor," he said. "And the federal election in 2015 is just around the corner. We must join with progressive forces across Canada to stop Stephen Harper."

Political action between elections is key to maintaining member mobilization, he said. "Voting is key, and we must continue our work to get more of our members involved in politics and voting but this is only one small part of the political action of our union. CUPE Ontario will build on this enhanced membership activity to up our game on campaigns to defend and strengthen public services across the province. It is this kind of political action that we must support year-round—action that ensures we can make progressive change in our communities."



CUPE Ontario celebrates World Pride

More than two million people, including hundreds of CUPE members from across the province, came to Toronto for World Pride at the end of June. The week-long event, which takes place in a different city every three years, was the largest and most vibrant Pride celebration in Canadian history.

"We have folks not only from across the province, but across the country because it's World Pride," said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn at the Pride Parade. The annual parade swelled to include 27,000 marchers this year, including a record contingent from CUPE Ontario. "I'm one of the first openly gay union leaders to be elected in Canada. We've done amazing work in our country, but we have an obligation to stand up for lesbian, gay and trans people around the world and make sure the rights we enjoy here are enjoyed by people in every country around the globe. That's what World Pride is about and that's what our union is committed to doing."

During the week, CUPE participated in an international Human Rights conference and demonstrated strong support for trans rights in the biggest Trans March in Toronto's history. The CUPE 966 bus also escorted members marching in a record-sized Dyke March on Saturday.

Along with Hahn and CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick and many executive board members, CUPE National President Paul Moist marched in the huge Pride Parade on Sunday.

"For Pride celebrations, we're in every community across Canada," said Moist. "In Toronto, there is a great diversity, and we celebrate all the rights we've fought for. Today, with the world watching, we defend those rights and we celebrate our diversity."

CUPE Ontario participates in Pride events throughout the province. For more information, visit cupe.on.ca.



Celebrating our work, our communities

Across the province, CUPE Ontario members provide the services that keep our communities strong. More than 240,000 members work in municipalities, health care, social services, school boards and universities.

Many locals host public events to highlight the important work our members do, and to build strong relationships with their communities.

In June, the Niagara and Peel District CUPE Councils held barbecues that drew hundreds from the communities our members serve.

“CUPE members put on Family Day because this is their community,” said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn at the 4th annual CUPE Niagara Family Day in the Park.

“Every day, our members provide vital public services to support the community. As a union, we work to build a better Ontario for everyone.”

Both events featured free food and a superb day for the whole family that included bouncy castles for the kids. In Niagara, the event also included live music by local band Renegade. “It’s a day of fun with our neighbours, our friends and our families,” said Niagara District CUPE Council President Susan Schmidt. “Our Family Day is just

one of many ways that CUPE members work to promote fairness and support our community. Everyone is welcome.”



Bonfield: Strength in solidarity

After 10 months on the picket line, members of CUPE Local 4616.3 succeeded in fighting off a litany of concessions. It was a long winter for the 16 municipal workers, but actions and expressions of solidarity from across the country kept spirits strong and helped members to stand one day longer, one day stronger.

"These workers are an inspiration to all working people who are being told that somehow we are the ones that need to have less for our futures, less for our communities, less for our children," said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn. "Their courage and strength, standing up for public services, standing against a bullying employer, are a testament to what working people can do when we stand together."

Within days of the strike beginning, CUPE members from across Ontario joined Bonfield workers for the first of many solidarity rallies.

CUPE Ontario organized many solidarity events, including a huge labour solidarity rally in October that brought leaders from Unifor, ETFO, OSSTF, USW and many more unions, and a mid-winter ice fishing "Rally for Fairness."



"Every time they came up to walk the picket line with us, they gave us another week to keep our morale up. It would last well after their departure," said 4616 member Gail Ashby. "It made a big, big difference in our ability to stay strong, to stay the course."

Members also arranged a Christmas party for strikers and their families.

CUPE locals visited the picket lines regularly, and the Local 966 bus was a frequent sight in Bonfield during the strike.

Representatives from the 4616 membership were greeted at the CUPE National and Ontario conventions and the CLC convention like

rock stars and received support and donations from across the country.

"The support came from across the country - it was phenomenal. When this strike started ten months ago, we didn't realize how huge the labour movement is," said 4616 member Diane Francouer. "As we went along, new locals were introduced to us - it was just fantastic."

After ten months on the picket line, the Bonfield workers are back on the job, having pushed back a litany of concession demands and showing the strength of solidarity.

Please join members in Bonfield on July 20th for a celebration event.



Brant CAS: Stop the shutdown

Workers at Brant Children's Aid Society (CAS) held a "Stop the Shutdown" rally on June 4, as the agency prepared to close its doors for five days in response to provincial government funding cuts.

"Shutting down the agency is denying at-risk children important CAS services," said Jennifer Kirby, unit chair of CUPE 181.2, which represents 161 workers at Brant CAS. "We are here to tell management and our community that shutting down vital services will not stop the continuous underfunding of public services."

Members and supporters marched from Brant CAS to the office of Liberal MPP Dave Levac. They were joined by CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn and local presidents representing CAS workers in Toronto and Hamilton, where similar rallies resulted in \$1 million in funding to stop five days of closures.

Child welfare agencies are required to provide protective services, regardless of funding restrictions. Changes to the rules about funding, combined with funding cuts from the provincial government have left



agencies across the province with significant shortfalls.

The result has been mass layoffs, including more than 70 workers in Hamilton, as well as programs being eliminated and shutdown days that leave children without access to a worker for up to four days in a row.



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Upcoming Events

Toronto Caribbean Carnival Parade

Aug. 2 – Exhibition Place, Toronto

People's Social Forum

August 21- 24—Ottawa

Labour Day Parade

Sep. 1 – Watch cupe.on.ca for list of events

Health & Safety/Injured Workers Conference

Sep. 10 to 14 – Delta Sault Ste. Marie

HCWCC Conference

Sep. 16 to 19 – Delta Sault Ste. Marie

Ambulance Workers Conference

Sep. 22 to 23 – Caesars Windsor

CUPE National Sector Council Conference

Oct. 6 to 9 – Toronto Sheraton Centre

CUPE Fall School

Nov. 18 to 23 – Toronto Sheraton Centre

CUPE Ontario Convention 2015

May 27 to 30 – Toronto Sheraton Centre

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