

Thousands rally to stop health care privatization

More than 3000 people, including hundreds of our members, joined CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn and Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick at Queen's Park on November 21 to stop the Liberal government's aggressive and systematic dismantling of community hospitals.

Hospital workers, patients, seniors, health care professionals, patients and concerned community members came from across the province to send a clear message to the Wynne government that health care cuts and the privatization of health services must stop.

"This is the systematic dismantling of public community hospitals all across the province," said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition, which organized the rally. We are seeing the death of community hospitals and we must take a stand to stop these cuts and privatization now."

CUPE National President Paul Moist echoed those concerns, as did doctors, nurses, patients and health care workers who spoke at the rally. Public funding for hospital services has not kept up with the rate of inflation for the last five years, and has been frozen with no increases for three years. At the same time, the Liberal government has been pushing services out of hospitals and into private clinics.

This has resulted in poorer care, extra billing and unsafe practices. "Providing the best possible quality and safest medical care should be the priority for health policy, not how much it costs and how to do it on the cheap," says Michael Hurley, CUPE Ontario 1st Vice-President and president of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions. "There is abundant evidence that patients are at greater risks at private clinics."



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Why did you get involved in municipal or school board campaign?



Ryan Finnemore
Custodial - CUPE Local 16
Algoma District School Board

"I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and get more involved in my community, and also with CUPE. This was a great way to do both. I enjoyed working with the candidates and had a great time out in the community with them, talking to people at the door and calling members."



Paul Norris,
Ferry Pilot - CUPE Local 109
City of Kingston

"By campaigning for candidates who share our vision of publicly operated and delivered services, we can make our communities better places to live. I am a firm believer that knowledge is power, and by getting information out to CUPE members concerning the importance of municipal elections and candidates who value our work."



Ann Jenkins
Ontario Works, CUPE Local 5167
City of Hamilton

"This was my first experience working in any type of election event. It was an incredible experience. I was able to connect with CUPE members across all sectors in Hamilton, encouraging them to get involved in the election. I also had the opportunity to network and build contacts with many councillors who were re-elected."



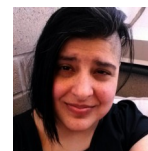
Tracy Rowan
Flight Attendant - CUPE Local 4047
Air Transat

"I learned so much and met many wonderful community members and other campaign volunteers. Felt especially proud delivering voters who needed help to the advance and regular polls—seniors and supporters with disabilities."



Adam Coones,
Library Worker - CUPE Local 1833
Peterborough Public Library

"I decided to work on several municipal campaigns, because...I see the need for a drastic change on city council. The solidarity of CUPE locals in the city really came out...I feel we demonstrated how much we play a role in this community and the importance of giving us a seat at the table."



Tracy Ford
Volunteer Coordinator - CUPE Local 2316
Children's Aid Society of Toronto

"It was an opportunity to support my union colleagues to change the conversation about public services and, in turn, our working conditions, through public engagement. My aim was to inspire members to learn about platforms, tell their stories as a unified voice to the public and to those running for office, and to support efforts in the community that will promote public services between elections."

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Municipal and school board elections – voting for good jobs and strong public services

Voters across the province chose CUPE Ontario members to lead their communities in municipal and school board elections in October.

"Public services are the backbone of every community," said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn. "Clearly our communities trust CUPE members, who spend their lives providing those public services, to stand up for them as elected leaders."

At least eleven members were elected to positions including mayor, councillor and school board trustee in communities from Windsor to Kenora.



Hundreds of members got active in municipal and school board campaigns. Their hard work helped elect mayors, councillors and trustees all around the province who support strong public services and good jobs in our communities.

In the end, more than 170 candidates were elected who were endorsed by labour and CUPE.

CUPE Ontario congratulates all these members and thanks the dozens of other CUPE members, retirees and staff in communities across the province who stood for election and fought hard for the public services we all rely on.

Members elected

ALDO DiCARLO, Local 1393 Mayor, Amherstburg	RENE LAPIERRE, Local 4705 Sudbury City Council
JENNIFER KITOWSKI, Local 5911 Keewatin-Patricia District School Board	BART WOOD, Local 4616-3 Township of Machar Council
JENNIFER AJANDI, Local 4207 District School Board of Niagara	DAVE NEESON, Local 905 Town of Georgina Council
SHAWN WILSON, Local 1287 Thorold City Council	MARK BURGESS, Local 7575 and 4186 St. Thomas Alderman
PAT CHIOCCHIO, Local 1263 Welland City Council	ALEX JOHNSTONE, Local 3906 Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
DIANE THERRIEN, Local 3908 Peterborough City Council	

Year-end letter from CUPE Ontario

If there is anything the last year has taught us, it is how amazing CUPE Ontario members are.

It has been a rollercoaster of a year with elections, government budgets with deep cuts, and some very tough bargaining. But CUPE members across the province have risen to every challenge and built a stronger, more unified movement.

In May, hundreds of members volunteered on election campaigns across the province to stop the threat of Tim Hudak's job cuts and attacks on unions. And in October, hundreds more supported municipal and school board candidates who stood up for good jobs and strong public services in our communities. It was an inspiring mobilization, and one that saw more than 170 endorsed candidates and many CUPE members elected.



Thousands of members participated in rallies, information pickets and creative events in campaigns to preserve and enhance public services in every sector, to fight poverty and to advance equality. This included an amazing demonstration of CUPE Pride at the World Pride events in Toronto.

This growing mobilization is happening in no small part because of Stand Up for Fairness. Today, more than half of locals have done Fairness training. They've seen higher turnout at membership meetings and members who are more connected with their union.

It's hard to believe that less than a year ago, we were out on an ice-covered lake supporting members in Bonfield who were on strike to fight off a litany of concessions. Thanks to overwhelming support from members in every sector, we won their months-long struggle, maintaining their strong collective agreement and winning gains for their members.

As with strikes and lockouts in Durham, Black River-Matheson and at the Continuing Education Students Association at Ryerson, Bonfield was a good example of how we can work together, across the province and across sectors. We must continue to do so as we fight to preserve services under attack – hospitals, public child care, community schools and so many more –services we all rely on as citizens.

Despite a tough bargaining environment, we're seeing locals not only defend themselves against concessions, but make real gains, like pensions for people who have never had them before.

The more we mobilize, the more we work with our communities, with coalitions, with members in other locals and sectors, the more we are able to make these important gains, even in this economic climate.

At year's end, we hope you are able to rest, recharge and spend time with people who are important to you, and in the new year we will rise again to build a better Ontario together.

In Solidarity,

Fred Hahn
President

Candace Rennick
Secretary-Treasurer

Building cross-sector solidarity

Members from every sector are rallying together to protect organizing rights and stand up for fair collective agreements for their sisters and brothers.

On October 22, members joined CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn in Maple for a rally outside Richview Manor. Workers at the long-term care home voted unanimously to join CUPE last January. The employer responded by contracting out their work.

“This is a clear case of union busting,” said Brother Hahn. “The employer has gone to extraordinary lengths to prevent these workers from being represented by the union of their choosing. We’re calling on Richview’s management to stop interfering and respect the democratic process.”

The situation is now before the labour board, and thanks to CUPE putting pressure on the employer, the workers got six months retroactive pay.

“When members in any local face challenges, it’s vitally important that we all show them they’re not alone,” said CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick. “In a strike, lockout, organizing drive or difficult bargaining, it’s easy to feel isolated. More and more, we’re standing together, across sectors and across the province. We must continue to show strength in solidarity.”

More than fifty members from a dozen locals showed just that support for members of Local 2192 with an information picket outside the employer’s board meeting on the cold night of November 26.

The members work at Youth-Link, an east Toronto agency providing services to at-risk youth who were struggling with their employer over basic issues such as having breaks and language around job security. Many members had never been to an info picket or rally before and were buoyed by support from their sisters and brothers, including Brother Hahn and CUPE Ontario executive board members Kelly O’Sullivan and Eddie Perreira.



Landmark wins in fight for retirement security



Workers in two Ontario locals won crucial pension victories this fall, gaining pensions for members for the first time.

Members of Local 4308 in Toronto, who work at SPRINT Senior Care, waged an energetic campaign including rallies, information pickets and a holiday music video.

On December 3, members ratified a collective agreement that includes the first workplace pension plan for homecare workers, drivers, community social workers and other front-line workers at the agency. Before this agreement, the workers, who provide services including personal care, Meals on Wheels, adult day programs, had no provision for retirement security. Many faced the prospect of retiring in poverty.

Thanks to this win, they will join the Multi-Sector Pension Plan (MSPP), as well as a modest salary increase.

“This is a great achievement by the workers at SPRINT Senior Care,” said Kelly O’Sullivan, chair of CUPE Ontario’s Health Care Workers’ Coordinating Committee and president of Local 4308. “They campaigned relentlessly for a contract that respects their work and ensures their right to retire with a degree of security. This contract does both, and none of it would have been possible but for the solidarity and commitment shown by the members of CUPE 4308.”

A week earlier, members of Local 2221 had a similar win, shifting members from a registered retirement savings plan to the union-run MSPP, which provides real protection for workers’ retirement benefits. The members, who work at COSTI Immigrant Services in Toronto provide a wide array of services including career counselling, settlement assistance for new Canadians, specialized employment services for foreign-trained professionals, refugee assistance and services for unemployed youth.

“Standing together, we achieved a new level of retirement security. That alone is something we can all be extremely proud of,” said Mahmoud Saddo, president of Local 2221.

The new collective agreement also includes major improvements to job security language, modest wage increases, and increased access to extended health care benefits.



Building strength in trades



With enthusiastic delegates from every corner of the province and attendance up from 2013, this year's CUPE Ontario Trades Conference was a big success and clearly underscored the growing recognition of trades as a vital part of the big CUPE Ontario family.

More than 130 members assembled for this year's Trades Conference, held in Niagara Falls, November 11-14. Registration was up 30 percent from last year. The annual conference has proven to be one of the best ways to bring trades members and discuss how they can build strength around their issues, face-to-face. The conference focussed on concerns with the College of Trades, contracting out, apprentices and contract language relating to trades.

Highlights included addresses by CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn and, by video, Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick, as well as guest speakers from the College of Trades, including former OFL Secretary-Treasurer Irene Harris, and Gord Falconer from the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). Members also passed a strong action plan for the year ahead, and participated in workshops on women and trades, talking about trades, taking on privatization and the future of trades.

During the past year, the CUPE Ontario Trades Committee has been working on several exciting initiatives. A new survey was created to collect important information in an effort to better serve trades members. The Trades Committee also unveiled a new web page, cupe.on.ca/trades.



Building a strong union through education

Every year, hundreds of our members participate in union education at the CUPE Ontario Spring and Fall Schools. Five members from various locals, sectors and equality-seeking groups were able to participate in Fall School this year thanks to the Bev Smale Scholarship Fund. The fund is named after Sister Bev Smale, a long-time activist from the health care sector, who became a staff member of our union, and who passed away suddenly in 2006.

The recipients participated in courses on labour law, the duties of recording secretaries, WSIB and return-to-work, and health and safety.

These scholarships are financed in part by raffle tickets purchased by our members at the Fall School. This year, members raised more than \$3,000. Prizes included Platinum Club Access to a Raptors game, Leafs tickets, a gift card to The Keg Restaurant and a fifty/fifty draw.

CUPE Ontario also offers the Lois Hill scholarships every year, which help aboriginal members or their children with \$500 toward post-secondary education. This year's recipients are CUPE member Brittany Madigan, and Marc Lécuyer, son of Claude Lécuyer, a 27-year CUPE member. The Lois Hill Scholarship falls under the umbrella of the Bev Smale Scholarships Fund and was



Raffle winner Darlene Dukeshire with CUPE Ontario 4th Vice-President Henri Giroux at Fall School. Participating in the raffle helps fund the Bev Smale Scholarships and strengthen our union through education.

created in memory of Lois Hill, a long-time CUPE activist and former president of Local 778.

Visit the Member Education webpage under the About Us section on our website (cupe.on.ca) for more information and to apply for the Lois Hill and the Bev Smale scholarships.

Upcoming Events

OCHU Health and Safety Conference

Jan. 12 to 14, 2015 - Toronto - Intercontinental Hotel

2015 OSBCC Conference

Feb. 3 to 7, 2015 - Ottawa Delta City Centre

OUWCC Conference

Feb. 19 to 22, 2015 - University of Ottawa

Women's Conference

Mar. 4 to 7, 2015 - Toronto Sheraton Centre

SSWCC Conference 2015

Mar. 26 to 28, 2015 - Delta Meadowvale

Library Conference

Apr. 7 to 8, 2015 - Delta Ottawa

OMECC Conference

Apr. 8 to 11, 2015 - Delta Ottawa

CUPE Ontario Convention

May 27 to 30, 2015 - Toronto Sheraton Centre

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