

Hundreds rally to save hospital services in North Bay

Hundreds of North Bay residents and supporters rallied in North Bay to protest massive cuts to hospital patient care and services at the local hospital. They were joined by CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn, members of the CUPE Ontario executive board from across the province, and by newly elected CUPE National President Mark Hancock.

“Provincial governments across the country spend 25.3 percent more on hospitals than the Ontario government does,” said Hancock. “Those hurt most are frail, elderly patients who are all too often pushed out of hospital to go home too early.”

Millions in cuts are in the works at North Bay Regional Health Centre, caused by a combination of funding cuts and unnecessarily expensive private financing as a result of the hospital’s public-private partnership model.

“Like communities across Ontario, North Bay is losing services because the provincial Liberals insist on following an austerity agenda that has been rejected around the world and are funnelling funds to corporations through privatization, even after the Auditor General revealed P3s have driven up costs by

more than \$8 billion,” said Hahn.

As a result of budget cuts, more than 350 front-line nursing care and service positions have been eliminated in North Bay as a result of budget cuts, hitting low-waged CUPE members particularly hard.

“The rain of cuts in North Bay in acute care, with the elimination of nursing and direct patient care, and mental health beds and programs, can be traced to the Ontario Liberals’ decision to lag hospital expenditures by 25 per cent relative to the other provinces. Among provinces and territories, Ontario’s Liberal government is uniquely financing a huge cut in corporate taxes by slicing billions from direct hospital patient care. Patients across Ontario are paying the price with less care,” said OCHU President and CUPE Ontario Vice-President Michael Hurley.

The Ontario Health Coalition, which organized the rally, estimates more than a quarter-million hours of care will be lost every year in North Bay if the current round of cuts go through. Similarly large cuts are also affecting hospitals in communities including Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, New Liskeard, Huntsville, Midland-Penetanguishene and Timmins.



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Education workers rally in Ottawa, York Region, Peel Region, Sault Ste. Marie and Windsor

Education workers rally for jobs, services and a fair bargaining process



The province's late-October ultimatum over CUPE members' work-to-rule job action in schools was met with displays of solidarity and determination in communities across Ontario.

Local after local held rallies and information pickets supporting their bargaining representatives, who had been in negotiations with the Council of Trustees Association (CTA) and the Crown since summer. Local actions followed Premier Kathleen Wynne's announcement of a November 1 deadline for all unions to reach agreements at the central bargaining table or face sanctions by her Liberal government.

Members of the Ontario School Boards Coordinating Committee (OSBCC) were buoyed by the solidarity between education workers and members from across

CUPE Ontario's sectors, determined to protect the supports and services they provide to students in the province's school systems.

"Our collective agreement is the best line of defence against cuts to the programs, services and assistance that students in our schools need to succeed," said Local 4168 President Moira Bell at a rally in London. "Our information pickets were meant to show that we were ready to defend services to students and we wouldn't cave in to the province's or the school board's threats to jeopardize them."

In the early hours of November 2, OSBCC reached a tentative agreement, ending work-to-rule for CUPE's 55,000 education workers.

Strong voices for CUPE Ontario members

At both the CUPE National Convention and the Ontario Federation of Labour Convention this fall, strong voices were elected to represent CUPE Ontario members.

The CUPE National Executive Board will include General Vice-President Fred Hahn and Regional Vice-Presidents Candace Rennick, Michael Hurley and Henri Giroux.

At the Ontario Federation of Labour, along with CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn and Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick, CUPE Ontario will be well represented with Joanne Webb as Aboriginal Vice-President and Donna Wiebe and Janice Folk-Dawson as Labour Council representatives.

Tackling the gender wage gap

CUPE Ontario social service workers are making their voices heard at government consultations on the gender pay gap.

Despite pay equity wins in recent decades, there remains a gap of about 30 percent in earnings between men and women. This is partly because many caring jobs, such as child care workers and personal support workers, are held predominantly by women.

At meetings across the province, members are discussing how claw-backs threaten good jobs and quality public services. They are also raising the issue of the “caring penalty” - the lower wages generally paid to people working in caring jobs as compared to those in similar non-caring jobs.

In Ottawa on November 12, CUPE 2204 members described how wage grants allocated in the 1980s and

90s are being clawed back and redistributed by the city to other low-wage workers. This is leaving child-care workers at risk of falling wages and leaving their workplaces in danger of closure.

Members are calling on the province to create a dedicated fund to close the gender wage gap and ensure child care workers don't lose the wage fairness they've achieved.

Developmental service workers are also participating in the consultations, raising the effects of chronic underfunding of public services on the gender wage gap.

Like child care workers, they are calling for dedicated government pay equity funding across the broader public sector. They are also calling for more initiatives like the \$180 million in wage enhancement grants the Ontario government recently made to stabilize the sector

by improving wages for developmental service workers.

The meetings began in October and continue until February 2016. (For details, visit <http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/about/gwg/consultation.php>.)

Supporting these efforts is the “Gender Pay Gap Bake Shop,” a pop-up display that has made appearances at conferences, community events and at a gender wage gap town hall consultation.

The stand's cookies and treats are priced one-third higher for men to reflect the 31.5 percent gap between in earnings that remains between men and women.

For more information or to book the pop-up bake shop for your event, contact SSWCC Chair Carrie Lynn Poole Cotnam at clpoolecotnam@gmail.com.



Still calling Code Red on SAMS



CUPE members across Ontario launched the second wave of their campaign to hold the Wynne government to account over SAMS, the Ontario Works computer system that continues to make life a misery for recipients of social assistance and the workers who deliver it.

Over the past 12 months, front-line workers have gone above and beyond to try and improve SAMS, taking part in surveys, providing comments and feedback, and participating in the working group created by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Despite their collective efforts, we have seen little progress from the Liberal government.

On November 12, members of CUPE and OPSEU joined together to declare Code Red, wearing red to work and using social media (#SAMS) to promote a day of action and protest. (Code Red is an internal term that flags SAMS' daily functionality – or lack of it. Code Red is still declared regularly at Ontario Works, a full year after it was implemented.)

From now to the end of 2015, CUPE Ontario members will also target the Minister of Community and Social Services through an "It's Still Code Red for SAMS" post-card campaign. For more information or to order post cards for your local, e-mail SAMS@cupe.on.ca or visit cupe.on.ca/sams.

Convention will bring greater diversity to executive board

This spring, members from across the province will elect representatives to a newly restructured CUPE Ontario Executive Board.

Following a year-long formal review, delegates to the 2015 Convention voted in favour of a historic change to expand representation and diversity on the executive board. The new structure moves from three

diversity vice-presidents to six equality representatives and a representative from Northern Ontario.

The equality representatives will be elected in their respective caucuses at Convention. They will also serve as chairs of the equality committees, which are elected at the Human Rights Conference in January (except the Women's Committee,

which is elected at the biennial Women's Conference).

The president, secretary-treasurer, four vice-presidents, six members-at-large and sector chairs will continue to be elected as they had before the restructuring.

The CUPE Ontario Convention begins May 25 at the Toronto Sheraton Centre Hotel.

Hydro: The next Liberal scandal



At the end of October, the province's Financial Accountability Office released its first report. It had looked into the proposed privatization of Hydro One, and advised that the Liberal government's plan to sell off 60 percent of our electrical grid was a bad idea.

In particular, the FAO pointed out that selling shares might give the province a short-term fiscal bump, but within a couple years the lost revenue will grow and leave the government worse off than it would have been keeping Hydro One public.

"Selling Hydro One has never made financial sense, especially for Ontarians who will pay more for privatized power," wrote CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn in a guest column that ran in the *Ottawa Sun* and five other daily newspapers.

Ontario has a terrible history with privatization and P3s, he says,

noting the similarities between the Hydro One sell-off and the sale of Highway 407. That highway, which is now the most expensive toll road in the world, was sold for \$3.1 billion, but now provides its overseas owners with nearly a billion dollars in annual revenue.

Ignoring these strong warnings and the opposition of more than 80 percent of Ontarians, and despite nearly motions passed by nearly 190 municipalities opposing the sale, Kathleen Wynne ploughed ahead and sold 15 percent of the company in November.

This fight is not over.

CUPE Ontario and partners in the Keep Hydro Public coalition and the NDP are continuing to build a broad base of opposition to the sale, which will drive up rates and eliminate public control and accountability.

Together with our partners, we are planning community meetings and rallies outside Liberal MPP offices. Keep Hydro Public and the National Farmers' Union (Ontario) have jointly filed a complaint to the Ontario Energy Board calling on the board to formally conduct a review of the sale and its implications for rates, reliability, quality of service and overall public interest.

"Each and every one of us must take a vocal stand against Hydro privatization, and stop Kathleen Wynne before she makes this into the next Highway 407 or gas plants scandal," said Hahn.

Visit KeepHydroPublic.ca or call Preethy Sivakumar at CUPE Ontario to find out how you can help stop the Hydro sell-off.

Holiday Letter – A year of change

The past year has been one of tremendous challenges across the province, but we have met them together with greater strength and solidarity than ever.

Clearly, the biggest change in the past year came with the federal election. We can take heart that we helped end the era of Stephen Harper's Conservatives – a government bent on waging war with working people and on creating a Canada that Canadians didn't want. Now we must hold the Liberals to account and see they live up to their promises. Throughout the election, the level of engagement and involvement by CUPE Ontario members was truly inspiring.

Also inspiring were the brave stands our members took against privatization, contracting out and poverty wages. It is impossible to list all our successes we've had in 2015, but here are a few examples:

- Members at the University of Toronto and York University ran inspired campaigns that drew support from students and faculties not only across the province, but around the world.
- Education workers engaged in the largest legal strike action in CUPE history and beat back concessions in a tough round of bargaining.
- Working with the community, we saved child care and Ontario Works programs in the Waterloo Region.
- When Windsor moved to contract out cleaners, our members mobilized, built support in the community and turned the tide on city council.
- Province-wide, we led a campaign that galvanized public support for keeping Hydro public. CUPE Ontario played a key role in building the nearly 85 percent opposition to the sale, and in having 190



municipal councils pass resolutions calling on the Liberals to stop their privatization plan.

While there is much to celebrate, much work remains to be done. Provincially, the Liberals have just said they intend to deepen their commitment to austerity, looking to restrain wages and budgets even more in the year ahead. And we must be ever vigilant at the federal level, where despite some very progressive promises, the Trudeau Liberals appear poised to follow Kathleen Wynne's lead on privatization.

As we continue the fight against privatization and contracting out, we will build on the strength and solidarity that underlies all our historic victories.

We encourage you to take some time over the holidays to reflect on your own successes this year, and encourage you to share those stories with us so that they may inspire all of us in the year ahead.

In Solidarity,

Fred Hahn & Candace Rennick

Municipal worker named Activist of the Year

Adam Coones, a member of CUPE Local 1883 was named Labour Activist of the Year by the Peterborough and District Labour Council at the council's Labour Appreciation Awards ceremony on October 23.

Brother Coones works at the Peterborough Public Library and has been president of Local 1883 since 2005, the same year he became full-time and won a grievance over seniority he'd filed as a part-time worker. That grievance now allows part-time workers to retain their seniority when they become full-time.



He went on to become president of the labour council, driving an agenda of increased solidarity action between unions in the community and working to get unions involved in electing a more progressive municipal government. He's known as an avid council-

watcher and regularly addresses council on labour and social issues. This fall, he took time off work to focus full-time on the federal election, working on the campaign of NDP Candidate Dave Nickle.

Upcoming Events

2016 Secretary-Treasurers Conference

Jan. 20 to 23 - Sheraton Parkway North, Richmond Hill

2016 Racial Justice/Human Rights Conference

Jan. 25 to 28 - Toronto Sheraton Centre

OSBCC Conference

Feb. 9 -13 - Sheraton Parkway North

Ouwcc Conference

Feb 17- 21 - Holiday Inn Toronto Yorkdale

Spring School

Feb 23-28 - Toronto Sheraton Centre

2016 CUPE Ontario convention

May 25 to 28 - Toronto Sheraton Centre

OMECC Conference

Mar 30-Apr 2 - Crowne Plaza Niagara Falls

SSWCC Conference

Apr 7-10 - London Hilton



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