

Convention Capsule

Saturday, May 28, 2016



New Executive Board most diverse in Canadian labour history

At our 2015 convention, delegates voted to make CUPE Ontario's executive better reflect the diversity of our membership.

With six new seats for representatives of workers who are young, women, people with disabilities, Aboriginal, racialized and LGBTTI, our board is now the most diverse in Canadian labour history.



"To take back what's ours": working class voices take over financial district

With chants of "Pay your taxes," working class voices took over the heart of Toronto's financial district yesterday, accompanied by signs that read "Resistance Is Fertile" and "The Revolution Will Not Be Privatized." Amid the towering glass symbols of corporate capital, more than a thousand delegates and community supporters rallied to "take back what's ours" and against governments' push to privatize public services and sell public assets.

Setting the tone for the rally, CUPE Ontario secretary-treasurer Candace Rennick said, "We're not going to take this shit anymore!"

Public services are the building blocks of communities but they are under attack, said many rally speakers. Working class people are struggling while banks and the financial sector benefit from "fire sale" prices on public assets like Hydro One.

"We are here to build a movement to take back what's ours," CUPE Ontario president Fred Hahn told the crowd. "We are the people who make Ontario work... With collective power and strength, I believe that we can win."

There's a natural alliance between public sector workers and racialized people who, said community organizer Umair Muhammed, "are most affected when public services are gutted or privatized."

John Clarke of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty focused on "capital's agenda of greed that's an assault on the poor, devastating our communities and degrading public services down to an empty shell."

PAVING THE WAY TO POVERTY
OUVRE LA VOIE À LA PAUVRETÉ



Together, we can build a better Ontario

National Secretary-Treasurer's breakfast – a healthy dose of financial accountability

National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury hosted over 250 delegates at an early-morning breakfast that included a healthy food selection served up with vital financial information to help locals stay in good financial shape.

“Our finances are our foundation,” said Fleury. “Let’s make sure that they are always rock solid.” Brother Charles stressed the importance of putting strong financial systems in place to protect members’ assets and finances. This would include a constitutionally mandated, annual internal audited report of local finances, conducted by trustees elected by the members. The internal audit, along with a written report, must be presented to the members and also sent to the National Secretary-Treasurer’s Office.

There was a packed room of highly engaged members, who were also provided with information on such topics as bonding insurance, CUPE’s electronic ledger, and financial officers’ course information - all financial tools to help locals stay on a strong financial footing. Members provided feedback to Brother Charles, offering ideas, suggestions and questions.

Delegates work to strengthen action plan

Debate continued on our action plan yesterday. Delegates spoke about the importance of fighting for equality by raising the floor for all workers through campaigns like “15 and Fairness.” Tackling precarious work and casualization across all CUPE sectors was another priority.

Delegates emphasized that CUPE Ontario must ensure university funding does not get wasted on high-paid administrators. CUPE Ontario must also step up its campaign against the failed SAMS and CPIN systems. These systems are hurting social services recipients, and the workers who provide the services.

There were passionate calls to stand up against workplace violence, and for more frontline, long-term care workers to give seniors the care they need. Members also highlighted the need to oppose the dangerous Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact, and for CUPE Ontario to green its day-to-day operations, starting with our convention.

The full, revised plan returns to the floor today for a final debate and vote.



Niagara members are joint recipients of Injured Workers Award

Two long serving injured worker advocates from the Niagara area are joint recipients of this year’s Injured Workers Award. Deborah Smith, a Chief Compensation Pension Officer, member of CUPE 1263, and Frank Ventresca, President of CUPE 4156, have for years served with compassion and commitment the injured workers from their locals and others in the Niagara area.

In 2014, both winners participated in an injured workers advocacy project through CUPE Ontario to help establish advocacy groups in all areas of the province. They worked together to set up the committees in Niagara and Hamilton and continue to collaborate to keep the groups going strong.



“We can Leap – we have to.”

Avi Lewis, one of the architects of the Leap Manifesto, gave an impassioned keynote address to CUPE Ontario convention delegates on Friday afternoon. He praised CUPE as one of Leap’s original signatories and linked the manifesto’s goals to those of CUPE Ontario’s Action Plan, which he called an audacious “call to arms with a no-holds-barred lust for social justice.”

The implementation of the Leap Manifesto, he said, would deliver the goals CUPE seeks, including “energy democracy that is in the public interest and under public control” and opportunities to deal holistically with issues like poverty, inequality and injustice.

Lewis also identified CUPE members’ jobs as “green jobs” and those working in the public sector as part of the green economy. “You are climate warriors,” he concluded, “and we need many, many, many more of you.”