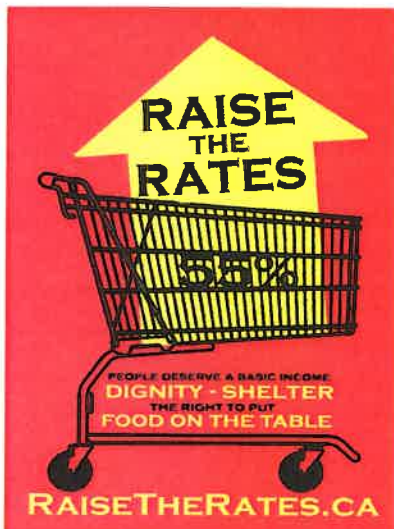


Every day, members of CUPE and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) work hard to make our communities stronger, healthier and more inclusive. Many of us know there is a fine line between making ends meet and seeing the ends start to fray.

For over 25 years, OCAP has fought for poor people in Toronto, and the province more broadly. Through those years, CUPE workers, both through their locals and province-wide organizations like CUPE-Ontario, **have worked in solidarity with OCAP** to build a formidable opposition to neoliberal policies that work to progressively weaken labour unions, gut social programs, and abandon an increasing percentage of marginalized people to the streets.



Raise the Rates demands a 55% increase in social assistance & disability rates

Organizing in Toronto's downtown east OCAP has built a base among the residents through **direct-action casework**, which seeks to simultaneously address material concerns while raising people's capacity for collective action. **In the year ahead**, OCAP is ramping up the campaign to **defend existing shelter spaces** for the homeless and pressure the City to open new spaces. Already, a report they released in February on the dangerous conditions created by the failing shelter system received national coverage. **CUPE-Ontario is working with OCAP** to double our efforts to raise social assistance rates by 55% to reverse cuts made by the Mike Harris government. This is especially important given record inflation of food prices this year, which is why we're planning an action in early April. We are also living in **times of intensifying austerity** that pits workers against each other. To counter this, OCAP has launched a monthly speakers series aimed at building collective analysis of our current political situation. The series has seen a strong interest from neighbourhood residents with average attendance exceeding 70 people per session.

OCAP fights to win and they recognize that doing so will always be **challenging work done on a shoestring budget**. However, they do maintain an office space at Sherbourne and Carlton, and have two paid staff organizers, both of which are pivotal to them being able to address the grievances of their base and **function as a de-facto union for poor people**. This year, however, largely on account of increased organizing costs, they are facing a **\$25,000 shortfall**.

This is why we are writing to you today. **CUPE-Ontario would like to encourage your local to assist OCAP in filling some of that shortfall** either with a **one-time contribution**, or better yet, by becoming a **monthly sustainer**. Cheques with one-time donations can be made payable to the 'Ontario Coalition Against Poverty' and sent to the OCAP office at **157 Carlton Street, Unit 201, Toronto, ON, M5A 2K3**. For those wanting to become sustainers, simply send them a void cheque and indicate the amount you'd like to contribute. You can even request OCAP to come do a presentation for your local about the work we do together. You can reach their office at **416-925-6939** or **ocap@tao.ca**.

Thank you for your support, solidarity and generosity. Your help is most appreciated, it helps move OCAP's work forward and lifts the spirits of those forced to live in poverty. Let's make sure more folks can make ends meet and thrive.

In solidarity,



OCAP and CUPE members march as part of the Raise the Rates campaign

Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam
Chair, Social Services Workers
Coordinating Committee, CUPE Ontario

Yogi Acharya
OCAP Organizer

John Clarke
OCAP Organizer