

CUPE takes Premier to court over hydro sell-off

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Thousands brave the rain to attend rally for decent work at Queen's Park

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Your CUPE Ontario Officers



Fred Hahn
President



Candace Rennick
Secretary-Treasurer

Political Pulse

News from CUPE Ontario

With more than 260,000 members, CUPE Ontario is a strong voice for rights and fairness for our members and our communities.

We work at the provincial level for legislative, policy and political change on issues affecting public services, equality, healthy communities and a better Ontario for everyone.

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Friends,

We are so proud to be leaders of an activist union. Across the province, in all sectors, CUPE Ontario members stand up for their communities, the people they serve and the frontline workers who provide the public services we all rely on.

Fighting to keep local schools open and to get a minimum standard of care for seniors in nursing homes. Campaigning to stop the privatization of hydro and to increase CPP so all workers can have a better pension. Enforcing health and safety laws. Fighting cuts to services and the outsourcing of good local jobs. When you run into a CUPE activist, you run into someone who cares.

There are times when we have to stand up for ourselves.

A lot of us can relate to the fact that we have been under attack by our employers over the last decade or more, and it's been getting harder and harder to do our jobs well.

Since June, five of our Ontario locals have been on strike. Two are still on the picket line. Several are now at the table with potential strikes on the horizon.

No one goes on strike lightly. It means losing much-needed income and not knowing when you will get paid again. Strikes are a measure of last resort.

The CUPE members of Locals 2974, 1989, 926, 2204 and 4914 have bravely stood up to their employers because it has been necessary.

What makes a union strong and what makes us powerful at the bargaining table is standing together. When we have members courageous enough to push back and say, 'No More!' we all need to stand with them.

Your direct support for our striking members is so important. We need to continue to be there — bolstering their lines, going to their rallies, donating to their strike funds.

We ask that you please visit www.CUPE.on.ca to stay up-to-date on current strikes and get the information you need to send direct messages of solidarity, send financial support and bring members to visit picket lines in your region.

In solidarity,

Keep informed! Follow us.



Facebook.com/CUPEOntario



Twitter.com/CUPEOntario



YouTube.com/CUPEOntario

Protecting Ontarians from Hydro Privatization

On September 14, CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn and CUPE National served notice of intent to Premier Kathleen Wynne and Ministers of Finance and Energy, to file a lawsuit against them for misfeasance while in public office.

“Our goal with this lawsuit is to protect the people of Ontario and Hydro One ratepayers, to stop any further sale of shares in Hydro One and keep the majority of shares in public hands,” said Fred Hahn who is one of the plaintiffs in the case. “The Premier and her Ministers had no political mandate to pursue the sell-off; experts made it clear the sale would be bad for Ontario and still they chose to proceed with privatization. Why?”

Prior to the sale of shares, internal government documents showed the vast majority of Ontarians were opposed to the privatization of Hydro One. Among the expert advice warning the Premier against the sale was the Province’s own financial accountability officer who stated: “In the years following the sale of 60 per

cent of Hydro One, the province’s budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale... The province’s net debt would initially be reduced, but will eventually be higher than it would have been without the sale.”



CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn briefs media at Queen’s Park

It has now been repeatedly reported that the Premier and her government Ministers have held exclusive fundraising events to raise money for the Ontario Liberal Party

with ticket costs running up to \$10,000 each. A recent Globe and Mail investigation uncovered that invitations to, and attendance at, these exclusive events included the banks that have made nearly \$60 million from the privatization of Hydro One so far.

“As with all suits of this nature, we are required to serve notice 60 days in advance of filing with the court,” said Darrell Brown, Partner at Goldblatt Partners and one of the legal counsel working on the case. “We cannot get into the specifics of the case until it is filed. The claim will be accessible to the public when we file it in November.”

“We do not undertake this lawsuit lightly, but our government has chosen to blatantly ignore the voices of the people and we’ve been left with little choice,” said Hahn, speaking at a press conference at Queen’s Park. “Further sales of Hydro One shares must be stopped before the people of Ontario lose majority control over our electricity system.”

Member Spotlight

Lori Wightman, Essex County Library Worker - CUPE 2974 Unit Chair



When life presents challenges, some people just rise to the top. Lori Wightman, is one of those people.

As a self-described introvert, Lori quietly saw to the needs of her members over the past ten years. She never expected to find herself leading a strike.

“Even when the employer came to the table with major concessions, I still thought we would be able to work it out,” she says, looking back on the beginning of what has turned out to be a life-altering event.

“We had never had a strike in our local. Making the decision to go out was a huge responsibility. Balancing all the variables and trying to figure out what’s best for the most members was a scary responsibility,” she says.

“I am so much stronger than I knew I was. And, I will give everything for the people I care about. I didn’t really know that before.”

Lori and her team had kept their members well-informed through the

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One thousand hospital workers rally for end to funding freeze

A thousand hospital staff from across Ontario rallied outside Kingston General Hospital (KGH) calling for an end to Ontario's underfunding of hospital care.

Hospital workers from as far away as Sudbury, New Liskeard, North Bay, Espanola, Hamilton, Stratford, Guelph and the Greater Toronto Area, joined OCHU President Michael Hurley, CUPE President Mark Hancock and CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick, to demand an immediate end to the provincial funding cuts that are choking the life from Ontario hospitals.

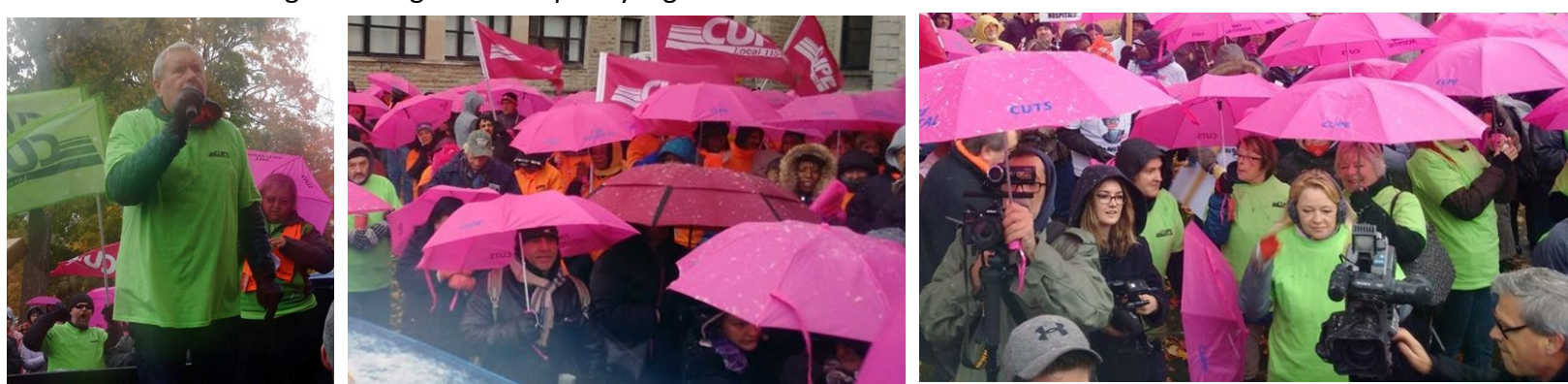
Ontario spends 25.3 per cent less than the other provinces, which translates to a \$4.8 billion annual funding shortfall.

"This lack of funding is leading to unacceptably high

readmission rates, bed shortages and six hours less nursing care for each Ontario patient compared with the rest of Canada," said Rennick. "Ontario now has the fewest hospital beds to population of any province in Canada and the fewest staff for those beds."

"We believe the merger of Kingston's hospitals is designed to cut more beds and services, even though KGH has been without an available bed for up to 25 days in a row during the last year," said Hurley. "Like most Ontario hospitals, Kingston hospitals simply don't have enough beds and staff for the number of patients."

Hospital staff represented by CUPE will be stepping up protests over provincial hospital funding cuts with demonstrations in 2017 in Hamilton on February 6, Kenora on April 26 and in Sudbury on June 15.



Record turnout at Labour Day events across Ontario



Building a movement that puts people first



The fight is on for the future of working people ...Are you in?

This past Labour Day allowed CUPE Ontario members across the province to take stock of our achievements, reflect on our struggles, and evaluate what is required to improve day-to-day life for everyone in our communities.

We have come through an era of corporate domination where it became accepted that corporations don't just need to be profitable, but that those profits must continue to grow bigger and bigger every year. We've been told that if profits don't keep growing the economy will falter.

To all workers out there we ask: How's that been working for you?

For most Canadian workers, wages have stagnated, workloads have escalated, and part-time and precarious work are being pushed as the norm, particularly for racialized workers and those under thirty. Women are still paid a fraction of their male counterparts, and the gendered wage gap is actually growing, not shrinking.

While corporations have been stockpiling billions in offshore bank accounts, people's costs are skyrocketing, workers' wages haven't come close to keeping up, pensions are under attack, there aren't enough jobs to go around, and corporations now pay such little tax that we're losing the public services that have

made this country a fairer place to live.

Compounding these problems, our governments are choosing to sell off assets and privatize the services that were built through our tax dollars, so that corporations can haul in even more money that should be going back into providing public services.

The Ontario Liberal government would have us believe that the only solution to their current revenue problem is to sell off our public hydro system. Their short-term cash grab is causing our bills to skyrocket to increase shareholder profits and gives away billions in long-term revenue. People all across Ontario recognize how wrong this is.

As many are saying these days, "It's 2016." Life should not be getting harder for most of us while a small group of elites continue to hoard more wealth than anyone could ever actually use.

It is time for the tide to turn. It's time for our government to stop bowing to the corporate agenda and start representing the needs of working people in this province.

As the government of Ontario embarks on its Changing Workplace Review in the year ahead, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to come together — say enough is enough — and ensure that any changes they make to the our labour laws are made to truly protect and

improve the lives of all working people.

It's time we focused on a true agenda for fairness "because it's 2016."

- Pay all workers a fair wage for their hard work — one that doesn't lock people into poverty
- End the gendered wage gap — make sure all women earn the same as their male counterparts
- Stop the explosion of precarious work and make sure none of us get stuck in multiple, precarious, low-wage jobs
- Create a public, universal, high-quality, accessible child care system
- Make profitable corporations and banks pay their fairshare in taxes — to help fund the services and infrastructure from which they also benefit
- Stop selling our public assets that will leave future generations even worse off
- Guarantee paid sick time for all workers covered under the Employment Standards Act
- Make it easier for workers to join a union — because unionization is a key component of our economic success
- Protect our aging seniors in long-term care by legislating the four hours of hands-on care that they need every day.



CUPE members from across Ontario join October 1st rally to support decent wages & working conditions for all



Strength on the picket lines

Gains for all. Big gains for those at the bottom. And no concessions.



Mississauga library workers from CUPE 1989 went on strike for 18 days in July where they did as much as they could to deliver library services from the picket line, including handing out free books and offering children's story times and performances.

The local went into bargaining with four principal goals: no concessions; a living wage for Pages; improvements for part-time workers; and the largest wage increase possible for all.

They achieved every one of these goals.

Having built the confidence of their membership, they went into bargaining with a clear strategy. They would not accept gains for one group at the expense of another.

"We all know that employers try to divide us, to play groups against each other," said CUPE 1989 president, Laura Kaminker. "Our union has fallen into that trap before. This time, we vowed that would not happen."

Pages, the local's largest classification — 28% of our membership — were earning just pennies above minimum wage. They now earn \$15/hour. The deal also included improvements for part-timers and a wage increase for all.

Essex County Library Warriors will never be defeated

The Essex County Council picked the wrong workers to target with concession bargaining. With the public standing strongly behind them, these determined library workers continue to hold strong.

Since the strike began, over 4,600 residents petitioned Essex County, almost 1,000 e-mails were sent to mayors and councillors and, recently, more than 4,000 called their elected representatives to demand action.

"The residents of Essex County want their libraries opened – they want their elected council members to show leadership and find a fair resolution to end this strike," said Lori Wightman, spokesperson for CUPE 2974.



Peel Children's Aid workers: Who's there to protect them?

Unrealistic caseloads and workers' safety are at the heart of the strike by Children's Aid workers in Peel. The 435 members of CUPE 4914 have been on strike since September 18 and are standing strong.

"Our goals have been extremely reasonable," says CUPE 4914 president Sonia Yung. "A better, safer working environment and modest benefit and wage improvements."

On the frontlines of child protection, these workers can find themselves in dangerous situations. Workers are assaulted and threatened on a daily basis, according to Yung, who wants Peel CAS to acknowledge the risk their employees face. Given what these brave workers face on a daily basis, they will not be backing down in from the employer's bully tactics.





We won't give up until our seniors get the care they need

When Premier Wynne decided to prorogue the Legislature in September, she killed Bill 188, a private member's bill designed to legislate a four-hour minimum standard of care for vulnerable seniors living in long-term care.

For former long-term care worker and CUPE Ontario's Secretary-Treasurer, Candace Rennick, this was far from acceptable. Within three weeks of the legislature being recalled, CUPE Ontario worked with NDP MPP France G  linas to reintroduce the bill, calling on all MPPs to put partisanship aside to do what's right for aging seniors.

"Increasing nursing and personal care levels for long-term care residents should be a priority for all Ontario MPPs regardless of party affiliation," says Rennick. "Our elderly and vulnerable seniors don't deserve any more stall tactics. They need additional care now."

For the past two decades, the complexity of care needs of long-term care residents – the majority of whom are 85 years or older – has increased significantly. Seventy-three per cent of residents have some form of Alzheimer's or dementia and most need help with feeding, bathing, toileting and getting out of bed.

Ontario currently has no standard of care for long-term care homes. The 'Time to Care' Act, now Bill 33, would ensure that all of us could feel safe in knowing that all

nursing homes across Ontario were required to deliver the same quality of care our loved ones deserve.

"Ontario has the fewest staff working in long-term care of any province in Canada," says Rennick. "Nursing home residents are a highly vulnerable, aging and frail population. These are people who have given their lives to building our province. Our government has an obligation to ensure they are well cared for in their final years."

"We owe it to them to make sure they are getting the level of care they need," says Rennick.



Rennick joins workers from Muskoka Shores Nursing Home to fight for better care for residents.

Visit: cupe.on.ca/support-time-to-care-act to email to your MPP asking them to support Bill 33

Queen's Park Review

In a move that took most Queen's Park watchers by surprise, Premier Kathleen Wynne decided to prorogue the Legislature only days before it was set to commence the fall sitting. Though not unusual in and of itself, what was different about this prorogation was the last minute, haphazard announcement coming just days on the heels of a significant by-election loss in a long-held Liberal riding.

Prorogation does two things. It kills all bills currently before the Legislature and allows the government to begin the new session with a Speech from the Throne read by the Lieutenant Governor in front of a raft of special guests and significant media attention.

Crafted by the Premier's top political advisors, a Throne Speech sets out the government's agenda. In this case, with the next election a little over a year away, it was seen by media as an attempt at a rebrand in the face of record low popularity numbers.

Ontarians want more than a rebrand

In an attempt to focus attention away from the public's outcry against hydro privatization, the Throne Speech laid out long-term commitments that included the creation of 100,000 new child care spaces by 2021, as well as the re-announcement of investments in

education, skills training, nursing and personal support care, and road and transit infrastructure.

In a direct attempt to address voter anger over out-of-control electricity costs, the government used the speech to promise an eight per cent reduction by removing the provincial portion of the HST from hydro bills. The savings on individual bills, calculated at an average of less than \$11 a month, will cost government an estimated \$1 billion in annual revenue.

At the same time, the government recommitted to keeping corporate taxes low and continues with their ill-conceived selloff of Hydro One that eliminates hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenue.

With Hydro One's new private shareholders set to make financial gains and the corporate world continuing to avoid paying its fair share, one might ask how the government plans to maintain current levels of public services let alone follow through on new commitments.

If the Premier had hoped for a bump in the polls, she must be sadly disappointed. A new Forum Research poll shows Kathleen Wynne's support at 14 per cent, an all-time low for a sitting Ontario Premier.

This may give credence to the rumours that some within the party are pushing for a leadership race in advance of the next election.

Anti-union legislation repealed: Big win for workers rights

On October 19, Parliament repealed controversial anti-union legislation brought in by the Harper government.

Bills C-377 and C-525 had been designed to weaken the ability of unions to advocate for workers and to make it more difficult for some workers to even join a union. The legislation was widely criticized with seven provincial governments

questioning their constitutionality.

CUPE members joined forces with other workers from across the country to raise public awareness of the threat the legislation posed to our democracy and the labour movement's ability to stand up for workers' rights.

"This is a significant victory," said CUPE Ontario's Secretary-Treasurer

Candace Rennick, who had been preparing Local Treasures for the substantive increase in workload that would have landed on their plates had Bill C-377 been aloud to stand.

"It shows how important it is for us to fight back when we know something is wrong," said Rennick. "We should feel proud of the work we did to help make this happen."



CUPE Ontario's 1st Young Workers Conference

- the future's in good hands



The fight for \$15 & Fairness topped the agenda at the first ever Young Workers Conference in October.

Despite higher levels of education than at any point in our history, most young workers are living a life of part-time and precarious work, usually in low-wage jobs. Often graduating with high levels of student debt, today's young workers are starting out with a significant disadvantage compared to generations that came before.

If this year's first annual Young Workers Conference is any indication, current employment struggles are creating an unprecedented generation of young labour activists.

Diverse to its core, this group of young activists is determined to build a fairer and more just world, where all workers are treated with the respect they deserve and where minimum wage is actually a living wage.

In a room this inspiring, one can't help but be hopeful for the future of the labour movement.



Health Care Workers' Conference



The health of health care workers was the focus of this year's HCWCC Conference.

Patient and resident staff ratios that leave workers run off their feet and make it impossible to provide the level of care patients and long-term residents need, are taking their toll on workers' physical and mental health.

While campaigning to get the Ontario government to address

the underlying problems within the health care sector, members at the conference discussed ways that they can take care of their own needs and provide support to fellow workers who may be struggling.

Members also developed the skills needed to build community engagement in our efforts to legislate a four hour minimum standard of care for nursing home residents.

Health & safety/injured workers' conference



Worker's health and safety is at the heart of all the work our union does, CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn told the overflowing hall at this year's conference.

"The research shows that when you privatize services, profit always comes before workers' safety and injuries go up. When we fight for minimum standards of care in nursing homes, it's a fight for higher staffing levels which

reduces injuries. It's all connected," he said.

Delegates spoke passionately about the work they are doing in their locals to keep their members safe. Some shared the struggles they face in getting members the support they need when they have a work-related injury.

Delegates left with new ideas, strategies and connections to increase the effectiveness of their

Member spotlight, cont. from page 3

whole bargaining process so, when the time came, she knew they were all on board.

"What I never expected was how close we would all become. Before the strike, we all worked at different branches and maybe saw each other once a year at training. Now we are a family," she says, with strong emotion in her voice. "All our members stepped up in ways I didn't know we would have to. We're a shy bunch by nature and everyone has pushed beyond their comfort zone. They are the strongest people I will ever meet."

"The hardest thing about this strike has been discovering that people elected to power can just turn their backs on you as if you weren't there," says Lori.

Despite a huge outcry of community support for the workers, the county council has refused to give the library board the direction necessary to work out a deal. After more than four months without their libraries many voters plan to make their disappointment known on election day.

Despite their underlying anger and frustration, Lori says her members continue to maintain their sense of humour and the lines continue to be filled with laughter. "I'm in awe of them – everyday," she says.

When asked what she has learned about herself through this struggle, she said, "I am so much stronger than I knew I was. And, I will give everything for the people I care about. I didn't really know that before."



CUPE Ontario celebrates black lives at Carnival 2016

Upcoming events

Trades Conference

Crowne Plaza, Niagara Falls
Nov 22-25

Women’s Conference

Toronto Sheraton Centre
Dec 7-10

OSBCC Conference

Sheraton Parkway North
Feb 7-11

OUIWCC Conference

Ontario Regional Office
Feb 22-26

Spring School

Toronto Sheraton Centre
Feb 28-Mar 5

SSWCC Conference

Crowne Plaza, Niagara Falls
Mar 23-26

Library Workers Conference

Caesars Windsor
Mar 28-29

OMECC Conference

Caesars Windsor
Mar 29 – Apr 1

Convention

Toronto Sheraton Centre
May 31-June 3



Stop Mayor Tory from repeating Premier’s disastrous hydro privatization scheme.

Visit: OurHydro.ca