

CUPE Ontario Women: Proud and Strong



CUPE Ontario flags were everywhere as thousands of women marched through the streets of Toronto on March 8, International Women’s Day.

This year’s event, the largest in North America, called on women to rise up against violence, hate, racism, Islamophobia, and poverty. Hundreds of CUPE Ontario members participated in this year’s conference and march, including Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick, Vice-President Yolanda MacLean and President Fred Hahn. At the conference, CUPE members Krystal King, Gilary Massa and Maureen O’Reilly spoke powerfully on gender discrimination in our workplaces.

Across Canada, women remain over-represented in part-time and precarious work. And in Ontario, women workers earn an average of 31.5 percent less than

men—a gap which is even higher for racialized and Aboriginal women, young women, and women with disabilities. In the past year, CUPE Ontario unveiled the Gender Pay Gap Bake Shop to raise awareness, and members presented to government wage gap consultations across the province.

Childcare workers at the march highlighted the lack of accessible childcare, a situation being made worse by the closure of public child care centres. In March, for example, Sault Ste. Marie, which already has hundreds on waiting lists for child care, dealt a blow to families of more than 100 children by voting to close the city’s child care centres.

Find out more about CUPE Ontario’s child care, gender wage gap and other campaigns at cupe.on.ca

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“Banker’s Budget” continues disastrous privatization

To hear the provincial Liberals tell it, their new budget is great news – free tuition, fighting climate change, a new public pension plan. But the numbers tell a different story, one of deep public service cuts, wage freezes and mass privatization.

“On every major file, given the choice between benefiting Ontarians and benefiting Bay Street, the Liberals have chosen Bay Street,” CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn said of the budget, much of which could have been written by privatization czar and former TD Bank executive Ed Clark.

The budget relies heavily on revenue from selling off more of Hydro One. It also is clear that little, if any, money from the sale will ever go into infrastructure. As well, the budget calls for more reliance on “Alternative Financing and Procurement,” which is code for P3s and privatization. P3s lead to reduced public services, higher cost to the public and job loss such as the bed closures and more than 300 jobs cut at the hospital in North Bay.

Across the board, ministry budgets are being held below inflation and population growth, meaning another year of public service cuts. It also continues the Liberal government’s “net zero” wage policy, despite public-sector wage increases having averaged just 0.6 percent since

2012 – well below private-sector increases.

What of the grandiose promises the Liberals talked about on budget day, like supposedly free tuition? It turns out the “free tuition” isn’t really free and doesn’t come with any new funding. It’s just a re-packaging of

“The Liberals need to stop letting bankers like Ed Clark drive the bus. They don’t have the best interests of Ontarians at heart.”

existing programs that will do nothing to stop skyrocketing tuition fees. The budget also did nothing to stop the increasing use of part-time and precarious workers in universities.

Climate change? Turns out the new cap-and-trade plan exempts the 102 top corporate polluters until 2020, and there is no indication that it exempts public services. This could mean our public schools, hospitals and universities will be forced to pay to combat climate change from already restricted budgets while wealthy, polluting corporations pay nothing.

And that public pension plan? Millions of Ontarians won’t be included (see sidebar). There also isn’t any money specified for eliminating the gender wage gap, despite Liberal promises.

“The Liberals need to stop letting bankers like Ed Clark drive the bus. They don’t have the best interests of Ontarians at heart,” said Hahn. Instead, the government should restore the \$8 billion a year in corporate tax giveaways and invest in public services that create good jobs and stimulate the economy.

Ontario pension a threat to CPP

Universal social programs are a point of pride for Canadians. We all support the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) because its universal nature means it benefits everyone. Expanding the CPP is the best way to improve retirement security for all Canadians.

Sadly, as CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn exposed in an *Ottawa Sun* column, the goal of universal CPP expansion is being threatened by a proposed, non-universal provincial plan in Ontario.

The Liberals introduced the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) because, at the time, Prime Minister Stephen Harper was blocking CPP expansion. Unfortunately, the Ontario plan isn’t modeled on CPP. It leaves out millions of workers who have “comparable” workplace plans, even if they’re little more than RRSPs.

Worse, this two-tiered plan is now being touted by Liberals as the model for federal CPP expansion.

For the good of all Canadians, CUPE Ontario called on the provincial government to stop pushing its two-tiered ORPP model for CPP expansion. Instead, Kathleen Wynne should use her influence with the Trudeau government to push for universal CPP expansion that will enhance retirement security for all Canadians.

Hundreds canvass to Keep Hydro Public

Residents packed into overflowing rooms in Scarborough and Peterborough to help launch the next phase of the campaign to stop any further sale of Hydro One by the Liberal government.

Well over a hundred Scarborough residents, including huge contingent from CUPE Local One, turned out for the first in a series of local launches focused on Liberal MPPs who have supported the sale of Hydro One despite overwhelming local opposition.

New polling shows 82 percent of Scarborough residents oppose any further sale of Hydro One, and 61 percent of voters say they're less likely to vote Liberal because of the sale.

"Scarborough MPPs, like Liberal MPPs across the province, better pay attention and start speaking up on behalf of their constituents, or voters will take out their anger in the next election," said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn at the February 27 launch. Following the event, residents fanned out for the first in a series of canvassing and leafleting events in two ridings represented by Liberal MPPs.

Leaflets, billboards and newspaper ads call on Liberal MPPs to stand up for the people they represent and speak out now against Hydro privatization. The campaign links MPP votes on the Hydro sell-off at Queen's Park and their role as locally elected representatives who should reflect the wishes of their communities and oppose privatization.

Three weeks later, Peterborough residents launched a similar campaign focused on Liberal MPP Jeff Leal and Mayor Daryl Bennett. Peterborough faces a double whammy, as it was recently revealed the city began exploring a sale of its local utility, Peterborough Distribution Inc., without even informing some city councillors, and despite widespread public opposition.

Earlier polling showed 88 percent of Peterborough residents oppose hydro privatization. A community meeting attended by hundreds of residents in mid-March made it clear they are equally opposed to the privatization of PDI.

As in Scarborough, local residents packed the room for the Keep Hydro Launch before heading out to canvass across Peterborough.



"It's clear the majority of us in Peterborough feel the same way about maintaining local control over our utilities," CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick said at the launch. "Jeff Leal needs to speak out to keep Hydro public. Mayor Bennett and council also need to listen to their constituents and act to keep PDI public."

For more information, visit KeepHydroPublic.ca

Members in action

Across the province, CUPE Ontario members took action this winter to fight precarious work, to fight workplace violence and to fight for racial justice.

Fighting workplace violence

In February, hospital staff and allies from across Ontario boarded buses for North Bay to support a CUPE member who was fired for speaking up about workplace violence. Sue McIntyre was fired from her nursing job at the North Bay Regional Health Centre after speaking about the systemic problem of violent assaults on health-care staff during a nursing conference in January.

“Firing Sue McIntyre was an abuse of power and an attack on free speech in a democratic society,” Michael Hurley, OCHU President and CUPE Ontario 1st Vice-President, said at the rally. Nurses and personal support workers with

direct experience of violence at work also spoke at the rally, as did CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn.

Polling shows 81 percent of North Bay residents agree that the hospital was wrong to fire a nurse for speaking up about violence. CUPE is fighting the dismissal.



Good jobs, great services, better lives

Hundreds of CUPE Ontario members and Torontonians rallied in Nathan Phillips Square in February to support CUPE Local 79's work-to-rule campaign. The local was fighting to secure a fair collective agreement with the city, which was demanding concessions that would create more unstable, precarious work. Local 79's workforce is predominantly made up of women, many of them part-time or temporary.

Speakers at the rally linked good municipal jobs to quality public services and healthy communities. CUPE President Mark Hancock and CUPE Ontario leaders including President Fred Hahn, Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick and vice-presidents Yolanda McClean and John Camilleri participated in the rally, along with several city councillors, labour leaders and Federal NDP Leader Tom Mulcair.



Black Lives Matter

CUPE Ontario members, including President Fred Hahn, vice-presidents Yolanda MacLean and Veriline Howe and members of the Racial Justice and International Solidarity Committees, as well as several locals, joined a huge crowd of anti-oppression groups at a Black Lives Matter demonstration against police violence on Saturday, March 26, outside the Toronto police headquarters on College Street.

The demonstration supported the ongoing Black Lives Matter Toronto tent city protest against anti-Black racism and police violence.

“We support Black Lives Matter because this is about us – our members, our families, and our communities. Black CUPE members face anti-Black racism every day. But this is also about solidarity against oppression,” said Hahn. “We are proud to stand with Aboriginal groups, the student movement, and other allies in the fight against anti-Black racism.”

The hard work of the Toronto coalition has led to the restoration of Afrofest as a two-day festival. CUPE Ontario called on Mayor John Tory, Police Chief Mark Saunders and Premier Kathleen Wynne to take immediate action to implement Black Lives Matter Toronto’s essential demands surrounding the police killing of Andrew Loku last July. On March 18, the Special Investigations Unit said the unnamed officer responsible would face no charges.

Read CUPE Ontario’s solidarity statement at cupe.on.ca.



Fighting precarious work

University workers and students rallied at the University of Toronto in February to fight against an increasingly precarious workplace.

The rally was jointly sponsored by CUPE 3902, which has filed a bad faith bargaining complaint against the university stemming from last year’s negotiations, CUPE 3261 which is fighting contracting out of cleaning jobs, and Unite Here 75, which faces attacks on worker seniority following the expiration of

Aramark’s food-service contract with the university.

The University of Toronto is the largest and wealthiest university in Canada, and its president, Meric Gertler, has spoken publicly about the dangers of precarious work and a growing income gap. Despite this, the university continues to contract out work to companies that pay barely more than minimum wage.

A similar fight to save cleaning jobs is underway at Wilfrid Laurier

University in Waterloo, where workers are fighting to preserve decent jobs on campus with a direct outreach to students and the broader community.

Visit cupe.on.ca to find online petitions supporting CUPE 3261 and CUPE 926.

Moving Forward – OSBCC 2016 Conference

More than 350 education workers from across the province gathered in Richmond Hill February 9 -13 for the annual OSBCC Conference. During the five-day conference, themed “Moving Forward,” delegates reviewed their recent experience with the first negotiations under the new, legislated central-local bargaining process. They assessed the accomplishments and shortcomings of the new process, and heard from various speakers who drew links among sectors in the ongoing fight against privatization.

The opening plenary included an address from MPP Lisa Gretzky, the Ontario NDP’s education critic, who raised the need for a funding formula review and lauded CUPE Ontario members who make schools clean, safe, functional learning environments. Anthony Girgenti, a former Toronto District School Board student who was diagnosed with autism at a young age moved delegates with his Artistic Guardian project, which speaks of his journey overcoming obstacles through communications skills, and to his experience as a special needs student.



OSBCC Chair Terri Preston, who was re-elected to another two-year term, spoke to the gains made in central bargaining and applauded the collective mobilization efforts members took throughout the summer and fall of 2015.

“Your first attempt at a province-wide work-to-rule really put education workers on the map,” she said. “Because of your mobilization work, we were able to make gains we might not have otherwise at the central table. And most of you have better internal communications systems now, which positions us well for future rounds of bargaining.”

Preston also outlined all the work ahead on a new provincial benefits trust, violence prevention, and fighting school closures.

Other speakers included Grand Chief Gordon Peters of the Iroquois Nation, CUPE National President Mark Hancock, CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn and Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick, and CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury.

PTSD bill an important victory for injured workers

On April 5, the provincial legislature unanimously passed Bill 163, the “Supporting Ontario’s First Responders Act (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder).” The bill includes the important presumption that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosed in first responders is work-related and eligible for WSIB coverage.

The government legislation comes after years of efforts by CUPE paramedics, other first responders and NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo to change legislation so it recognizes PTSD as being a result of an emergency

worker’s employment. The “presumptive” amendment to existing legislation includes paramedics and paramedic services communication officers, as well as firefighters, First Nations emergency, corrections workers and police.

“We’re optimistic that what’s being proposed by the labour minister will simplify access to benefits,” said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn. “Paramedics and other first responders often witness horrific trauma and we must all do what we can to remove barriers for them to access help and

support when they need it.”

CUPE represents more than 5500 paramedic workers across Ontario and has been campaigning for years for a Bill that recognizes PTSD can be caused by the work of first responders.

“This change to WSIB is positive, but long-overdue. I want to thank everyone – particularly NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo, who has championed the cause and introduced a Bill such as this several times,” said Jeff VanPelt, a paramedic and chair of the CUPE Ambulance Committee of Ontario (CACO).

University workers rise, resist, reclaim



An exciting lineup of speakers, breakout groups, a Black Lives Matter solidarity forum and panels on topics including mobilization and working with on- and off-campus allies energized members at the CUPE Ontario University Workers Coordinating Committee (OUWCC) conference February 18-21 in Toronto.

The four-day conference kicked off with a panel on the potential of students, workers and community, featuring CFS Ontario Chair Rajean Hoilett, OFL Vice-President Ahmad Gaied and Pam Frache from the Workers Action Centre. On Friday, labour historian Jenny Carson joined CUPE researchers for a panel on “Why we need to rise,” which was followed by a “How to resist” panel looking at local campaigns and membership mobilization.

The week continued with a Saturday session on bargaining and reclaiming our workplaces that featured CUPE National President Mark Hancock and Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury. CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn spoke on the benefits of coordinated bargaining and sector chair Janice Folk-Dawson teamed up with Margo Pasley to set provincial priorities. The afternoon session and breakout groups delved further into the theme of “Rise, resist, reclaim.”

CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick kicked off the final day, followed by CUPE Ontario 3rd Vice-President John Camilleri, who introduced a new phase in the Keep Hydro Public campaign and discussed the implications of hydro privatization for students and university workers.

OMECC: Building our bargaining strength

Ontario’s municipal workers are teaming up to improve their strength at the bargaining table and profile in the communities they serve.

The annual CUPE Ontario Municipal Employees Coordinating Committee (OMECC) Conference took place March 29 to April 1 in Niagara Falls. Delegates elected a new committee,

including a new sector Chair, Ann Jenkins, a longtime activist and third vice-president of CUPE 5167 in Hamilton, who will work with new sector Coordinator Alison Davidson.

This year’s conference theme was “Building our Bargaining Strength: The Sequel,” and featured a lineup of speakers that included CUPE National President Mark Hancock

and Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury, and CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn and Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick.

A highlight was a riveting presentation on workplace mental health issues by Mark Henick, a case manager with the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Convention 2016 to build fight against privatization

The 53rd annual CUPE Ontario Convention will take place at the Toronto Sheraton Centre Hotel from May 25-28, preceded by a day of caucus meetings.



Convention is CUPE Ontario's highest, democratic decision-making body. More than 1000 members from across the province come together to elect our leadership, debate resolutions and vote on an action plan for the year ahead.

This year's Convention theme is "Privatization: Paving the Way to Poverty." Privatization is at the root of deep cuts to public services in every sector across the province. As bankers push "alternative financing," "public-private partnerships," "contracting out" and "asset recycling," the public is losing services and billions of dollars to the hands of profitable corporations. Today, under the Ontario Liberals, we are seeing the biggest wealth transfer in history from the public hands of the many to the private hands of the few.

Together, CUPE members will create a strong plan to resist the privatization agenda and instead build the better Ontario we all deserve.

Visit cupe.on.ca for registration information and updates on our exciting lineup of speakers and events.

Upcoming Events

OMECC Conference

Mar 30 - Apr 2 - Crowne Plaza Niagara Falls

SSWCC Conference

Apr 7 - 10 - London Hilton

2016 CUPE Ontario Convention

May 25 - 28 - Toronto Sheraton Centre

CACO Conference

Sept. 19 - 20 - Double Tree by Hilton Hotel London

HCWCC Conference

Sept. 20 - 23 - Double Tree by Hilton Hotel London

Northern Ontario CUPE Conference

Oct. 5 - 7 - Ramada Timmins

Young Workers Conference

Oct. 13 - 15 - Chelsea Hotel, Toronto

Health & Safety / Injured Workers Conference

Oct. 25 - 29 - Crowne Plaza, Niagara Falls

Political Action Conference

Nov. 1 - 4 - Toronto Sheraton Centre



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