



80 Commerce Valley Drive E, Suite 1
Markham, ON L3T 0B2
Phone: 905-739-9739 • Fax: 416-739-9740
Web: cupe.on.ca E-mail: info@cupe.on.ca

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Sisters & Brothers, Comrades & Friends,

As 2017 draws to a close, let's reflect on the significant victories that we've accomplished together this year.

Thanks to the work of CUPE Ontario members, our partners in labour and our community allies, we were successful in getting the Ontario government to pass Bill 148 and legislate real improvements for all working people.

Thanks to all our work, the minimum wage is going up to \$14/hour on New Year's Day and \$15/hour the following year. This will make a real difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of workers in our province including some of our own members. It also strengthens our ability to bargain better wages for all our members.

Bill 148 also legislates equal pay for part-time workers doing the same work as full-time employees. When implemented, this will not only bring up wages for many of our part-time members, but will also stop employers from turning good full-time jobs into more part-time work to get away with paying people less.

Along with these victories, Bill 148 also includes improvements to minimum vacation and emergency leave times, scheduling protections and changes to the Labour Relations Act that will make it a bit easier for people to join a union.

This last year also saw the strength of CUPE members in Ontario standing up to their employers as an inspiration to the whole labour movement.

In the face of more than a decade of hard bargaining our members have said, no more! Thirty of our locals walked the picket line rather than settle for concession agreements or agreements that didn't provide the gains their members needed. Their courage not only strengthened their locals, but put the rest of our employers on notice that we won't be bullied into bad deals. CUPE is a union that fights and wins for our members!

One of our proudest accomplishments of this year has been our work to get seniors living in long-term care the level of care they need.

Our seniors are suffering. Despite the best efforts of staff, many of their basic needs are not being met. For example, staff have only five to ten minutes to help a resident with their morning routine. This includes waking, washing, dressing and use of the commode.

Our parents and grandparents, those who built our communities and our Province, deserve so much better.

Ontario's seniors deserve a guaranteed minimum standard of care in their final years. That's why we have worked with the NDP to bring forward Bill 33 (Time to Care Act.) The bill would make four hours of direct hands on care, each day, for residents in long-term care homes the law in Ontario.

Thanks to the work of our members, joined by so many others in communities across Ontario, MPPs all across the province heard directly from more than 75,000 Ontarians asking them to support Bill 33. The work paid off and both the Liberals and the Tories were forced to support the bill on second reading. Now we just need to make sure that the bill continues to move forward and that we get it passed before the spring election.

We now have a new message to MPPs on TimeToCareOntario.ca. This holiday season, we need you to take a minute, to go to the site, and use this easy tool to tell your MPP to make sure Bill 33 becomes law before June. It would be great if you shared this through your networks as well.

As we start thinking about 2018, we know we will have a busy year ahead of us. Next year we will have both Provincial and Municipal / School Board elections across Ontario – along with a host of other things. But there will be time to plan and think about those things in the New Year!

We hope that over the coming month you will have some down time, some time away from work and from union activism, to relax and to spend time with people you love. For those of you who are about to begin some well-deserved holiday time, we hope it is filled with rest, joy and laughter.

As a public sector union, however, we know that many CUPE members will remain hard at work over the holidays, serving our communities, across Ontario.

We send our deep gratitude to all the snow plow operators; paramedics; hospital, long-term care and homecare workers; transit operators; hydro workers; shelter support staff, and social services and community agency staff, whose hard work and dedication, keep our province running all year round, but especially at times of the year when many others are away from their work.



As we head into the new year, we send you our warmest wishes and look forward to all that we will do together in the year ahead.

In solidarity,

Fred Hahn, President

Candace Rennick, Secretary-Treasurer