



BE BOLD. BE BRAVE. DEMAND BETTER.

2018 CUPE Ontario Convention Review

CUPE Ontario's 55th Annual Convention

More than 1000 delegates gather to demand better for public services



This year's convention theme: "Be Bold. Be Brave. Demand Better." is about what we do as a union every day. We speak out. We raise expectations. And we demand better from our employers and from our governments.

It's about the strength and courage our members continue to demonstrate in our collective fight to build a fairer province. A province where people have good jobs and access to the public services they need.

It's about building a better future for everyone in our communities.

Believe in the power of solidarity - Hahn



Be Bold, Be Brave – Demand Better. "This is not just a theme – this is the foundation for the whole way we approach our work in CUPE Ontario - with our members, around the services we deliver, and in our work with others in coalition for a better province, a better country, a better world," said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn as he addressed convention. Urging members to "believe in

the power of solidarity," he told delegates that this belief was key to building strength in our union and solidarity in our communities.

He highlighted the fight for four-hours of care for seniors in long-term care, support for the overdose prevention site in Toronto's Moss Park, and the fight to keep Hydro One in public hands – as critical CUPE Ontario work that built alliances with people and organizations beyond the union.

Hahn recognized the need to adapt to changing circumstances, celebrating the historic creation of the new Ontario School Board Council of Unions that will mobilize 60,000 CUPE education workers "to bring the full power of our union to bear in the province."

In a more somber moment, he acknowledged the need to demand better of ourselves in the fight

against the rising tide of racism and hate. Stating firmly that we cannot let those who rely on hate and discrimination to be successful in their goal to separate us from each other.

When it came to the provincial election, he didn't hold back about what is on the line for our jobs and the services we provide.

"On June 8th, we need to be able to look ourselves in the mirror and know we did everything we could, not just to stop Doug Ford, but to elect an NDP Government in Ontario," Hahn said.

"I believe in the power of CUPE Ontario. I believe in the strength of our members. I know, we are bold enough and brave enough to go out and get the better change our province needs," he said. "So, courage my friends, we're about the build a better world."

A bold vision backed by resources and action



“At our last convention, we set a bold agenda for CUPE Ontario and I am proud to say that we followed through on our commitments by backing them up with meaningful resources,” said CUPE Ontario’s Secretary-

Treasurer Candace Rennick, beginning her report to delegates.

Rennick praised all the locals and members who stood up to their employers over the past year – especially those that have taken strike action. They are examples of what it means to demand better and back those demands with action, she noted.

The Secretary-Treasurer’s report gave members a full picture of the union’s financial health, with a breakdown

of how all money was spent.

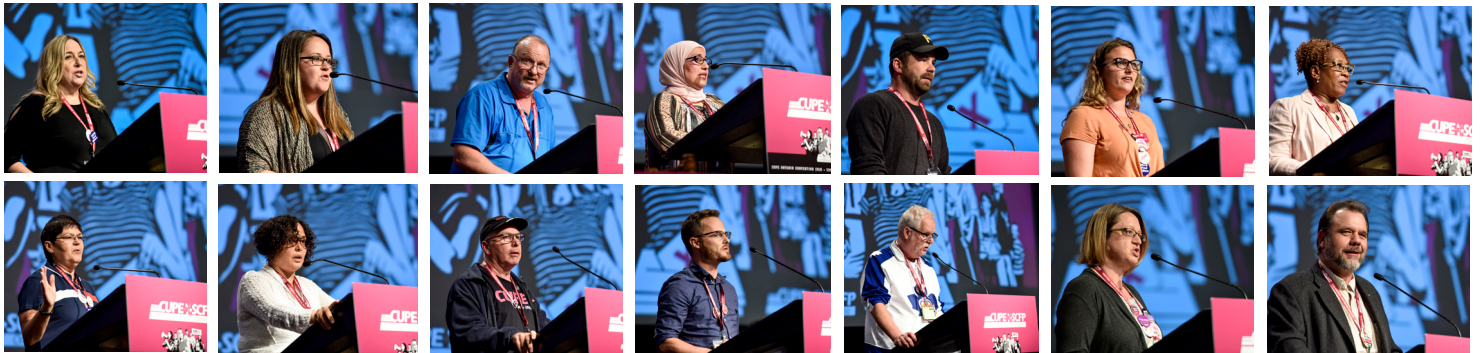
“Our approach to building a strong CUPE Ontario is to build the capacity of our sectors, committees and councils,” she said. “We put effort and money into the mobilization and engagement of members at the local level.”

Rennick combined the personal with the political, sharing stories that brought her family into direct contact with mental health services starved of funding, and with hard-working CUPE members in long-term care. She spoke passionately about the people who cared for her father, working their hearts out under conditions that just weren’t fair. “It reinforced how critical our campaign is, to win better standards for seniors and workers,” she said.

She concluded by calling on all CUPE members to demand change for the better.

“If we keep putting all we can into the remaining days of the election campaign, change for the better is what we will win,” she said “But the right-wing forces won’t stop. No matter what happens with the provincial election, we must keep organizing. We must demand more.”

All-candidates forum showcases members options for new executive



The provincial election loomed large in CUPE Ontario’s own all-candidates forum. Candidates focused on the threat of a Doug Ford government. Others were optimistic that Andrea Horwath will be Ontario’s next premier. All agreed that no matter what happens on June 7th, CUPE will need to be ready.

Candidates pledged to bring enthusiasm and experience to lead CUPE Ontario into a new era. A Doug Ford victory means CUPE must be ready to defend public services. An NDP government will face challenges to its progressive platform and will require a mobilized CUPE

membership to push their platform forward.

In total 24 members stood for election including nine candidates for the six member-at-large positions and two members for the position of trustee.

The candidates fielded questions from the audience about how to make the CUPE Ontario executive more representative of the membership. Candidates spoke to the need for members to break down barriers at the local level to foster an environment where members from all walks of life are encouraged to run.

Health & Safety Award

Persevere to affect change, says health & safety award winner

Every worker should feel safe and protected at work, but that's not the reality in many workplaces. This was the case at the Cobourg area, long-term home where Kellie Cochrane has worked as a registered practical nurse since 2001.

Cochrane, this year's recipient of the CUPE Ontario Health and Safety Award, said she was "very green" when she first started working for safety improvements in her local. She persevered to tackle a culture where workers' voices about health and safety concerns, including rising rates of workplace violence were ignored by the employer.

Today, thanks to her efforts, workplace safety checks are done, joint health and safety meetings are no longer employer-run, and member participation has been restored, as has their confidence in the process.



Sister in Solidarity Award

Maureen O'Reilly: Library Warrior & Sister in Solidarity

Recently retired library worker, past president of CUPE 4948 and unrepentant library warrior, Maureen O'Reilly was recognized with the Sisters in Solidarity Award. The honour caps a career spent defending public services, championing library workers, and breaking down barriers for women.

Among her achievements: leading a successful strike to fight off 10% cuts to library budgets; taking on Toronto's Ford brothers over the value of libraries; and leading the fight to end precarious work for library workers.

Sister O'Reilly acknowledged the support of her family, including her 92-year-old mother, and accepted her award "on behalf of CUPE members who fight for justice every day."



Racial Justice Award

Lahoma Thomas & Pamela Arancibia: Calling out racism

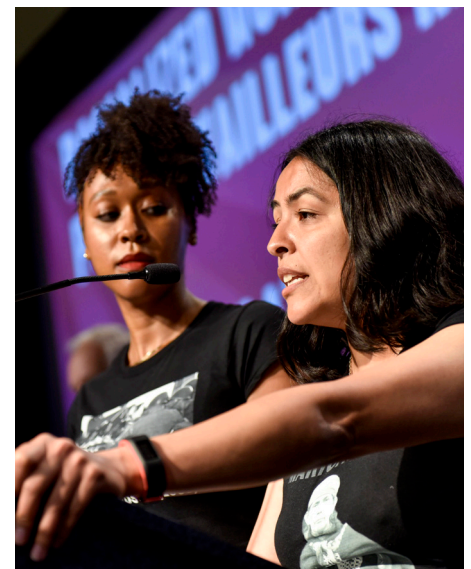
Warning they were "not well-behaved women of colour," the co-winners of the Racialized Workers Award gave searing accounts of their experience fighting racism.

Members of CUPE 3902, Lahoma Thomas and Pamela Arancibia accepted the award "on behalf of every racialized worker who has been demeaned, belittled, undervalued, and passed over."

"Speaking out against racism and white supremacy in the workplace, in our locals and in CUPE comes at great risk... but the knowledge that we're not alone in our experience compels us to speak out," said Thomas.

Arancibia continued: "Before we can fight racism out there, we need to fight it in here.... We're not being the change we want to see in the world when the most recent round of hires is all-white or white-passing."

"Hypocrisy will not douse the fire for racial justice that burns in our bellies."



Commit to government for good, not the “abyss” of Doug Ford



“We are at a moment of change” in Ontario, said convention keynote speaker and Hamilton city councillor Matthew Green. “We are having a values conversation,” and it’s one we should all be engaged in, he challenged delegates.

“Wages have been suppressed, benefits and pensions stolen and jobs shifted into a precarious economy, so that Liberals can talk about the jobs they created instead of how many good jobs they destroyed,” he said.

Green positioned the June 7 provincial election as a choice for a government that’s an institution for good and the only place that can level the playing field.

Doug Ford and the Conservatives are not that party said Green. They will download funding cuts to municipalities, hospitals and schoolboards. “That’s how austerity works. But we are rejecting that,” said Green who characterized a possible win by the Ontario PCs as death by a thousand cuts of Liberalism and the sell-off of public services.

“You have a choice – to be on the sideline and watch or do what it actually takes to win – to get out in those streets and talk to your neighbours,” he said. “In your hearts, what are you willing to commit to in your neighbourhood, the politics of hope and change for the better or the abyss of Doug Ford?”

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Injured Workers Award

School board workers, co-winners of award



The co-winners of CUPE Ontario’s Injured Workers Award share more than just the honour of winning. Carlos Capurro (CUPE 4400 in Toronto) and Keith Levere (CUPE 4156 in Niagara) are both school board workers with tenacious drive, advocating for injured workers. Employers are more interested in putting up barriers than solving problems they said.

Both relayed stories of the importance of unions’ breaking new ground when it comes to representing vulnerable workers with cognitive impairments or chronic mental health stress.

Motivated by personal tragedy when his father died following a workplace accident, a 16-year old Levere became a health and safety, injured worker activist, helping his mother access the supports she needed. “We must continue to work together to find ways to minimize workplace fatalities and disease,” said Levere.

Capurro said he thinks creatively to solve WSIB issues, but noted that employers are often resistant, particularly when it comes to a “no accommodation” policy. Passing on advice that he received when first starting out as injured workers’ advocate, he said “when in doubt fill it out.”



In heart of Financial District, CUPE Delegates ‘Demand Better’

Following lunchtime adjournment, 1000 convention delegates spilled out of the Sheraton and onto Bay Street, shutting down Canada’s financial centre with a loud, proud and empowering rally. Their message: We demand better.

Surrounded by a sea of pink CUPE flags held by workers from health care, school boards, universities, social services and municipalities, CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn had a message for the Bay Street elite looking down from their glass and steel office towers:

“We’re here to say that our services,

the ones we deliver, the ones that we have bought and paid for with our taxes – hands off you bankers.”

The crowd was revved up by hip-hop artist Mohammed Ali whose rhymes focused on the plights of working people and the damage caused by the Liberal government. All speakers focused on the need to elect a government committed to building a fairer society – not one in the pocket of corporations.

CUPE National President, Mark Hancock reflected that the Ontario election campaign calls to mind the movie ‘The Good the Bad and

the Ugly’. “Kathleen Wynne and their Liberal privatization schemes are the bad. Doug Ford and the Conservatives – I’m sorry, but they’re the ugly. Andrea Horwath and the NDP are the good. They’re the party we need to represent the needs of working people.”

Hahn put corporate CEOs and bankers on notice. “We will do everything we can to elect a government that serves the needs of the people in our communities. And once we elect an NDP government, we will be ready to mobilize to ensure they can enact the policies that improve our lives.”





CUPE ONTARIO





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CUPE Ontario members march on the Ministry of Labour to fight for Injured workers



CUPE Ontario Vice Presidents to continue their work on the executive board



Michael Hurley
First Vice President

CUPE Ontario's four vice presidents have been given the go ahead from convention delegates to continue their work on the executive board. With all four positions being acclaimed, the candidates accepted their nominations, graciously thanking members for the opportunity to serve.

Michael Hurley, President of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, will continue to serve as CUPE Ontario 1st Vice President.

Yolanda McClean, Equity Vice President at CUPE 4400, accepted her nomination for 2nd Vice President, enthusiastically pledged to members that she will join them on the picket lines, in campaigns and at rallies.

Eddie Pereira, President of CUPE 2544, acclaimed as 3rd Vice President, thanked the delegates for the opportunity to continue his work mobilizing and supporting striking locals.

Tiffany Balducci accepted her nomination for 4th Vice President. The member of CUPE 1281 and president of the Durham Northumberland CUPE Council is looking forward to the work that lies ahead.



Eddie Pereira
Third Vice President



Yolanda McClean
Second Vice President



Tiffany Balducci
Fourth Vice President

Equality caucuses elect representative to ensure a fairer union

Over the course of convention CUPE Ontario's equality committees held caucuses to elect their representatives to the CUPE Ontario Executive Board.

Veriline Howe returns to her position as Racial Justice representative. Howe has been instrumental in developing CUPE Ontario's campaigns to fight racism.

Dawn Bellerose returns as Aboriginal Council representative, pledging to continue her work to dispel myths about Aboriginal workers.

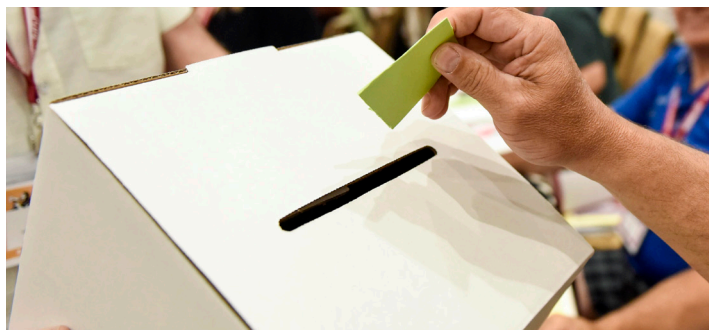
Peter Stapper continues his work as the Workers with Disabilities representative, asking that CUPE members to join him in his mission to "transform the corporate ladder into a union ramp."

Yasmeen Mirza is the new Women's representative. She sees CUPE Ontario at the forefront of equal pay, child care, and precarious work campaigns, but believes we need all hands on deck to win.

Tina Garnett was newly elected to the Board as Pink Triangle representative. She believes that equity looks very different when we only look at it through one prong and wants to bring an intersectional analysis to her role.

The Northern Caucus also elected their new representative Bryan Keith. He aims to help locals in Northern Ontario to fully participate in CUPE Ontario activities.

For the first time CUPE Ontario's convention was open to retiree delegates who held their first caucus and elected their representative at the board. Stephen Seaborn now joins the board in this capacity.



Veriline Howe
Racial Justice Chair



Dawn Bellerose
Aboriginal Workers Chair



Peter Stapper
Workers with Disabilities Chair



Yasmeen Mirza
Women's Chair



Tina Garnett
Pink Triangle Chair



Bryan Keith
Northern Ontario Chair

Stephen Seaborn
Retiree Representative



Hotly contested race for six member-at-large

In a highly contested election involving sixteen candidates, delegates voted in a mix of new and familiar faces as the six members-at-large to the CUPE Ontario Executive Board.

Dave Smith, out of CUPE 4400, will return for his fourth term and pledges to continue making CUPE Ontario a political force in the province and advancing an equity agenda.

Patrick Hannon, Recording Secretary for CUPE 543, is also returning to the Board. Hannon has been a prominent labour activist in Windsor for 25 years.

New faces include Emmanuel Ansah, a young activist from CUPE 4914 who plans to engage more rank-and-file members in the union's work through open communication and relationship building.

Brittney Nisbett was elected from CUPE 2944. Brittney will use her experience with the Young Workers Committee to give a voice to young workers on the Executive Board.

Tracey St. Aubin is the Inside Vice President for CUPE 5167 and member of the Social Service Workers Coordinating Committee. She is a strong activist who will advocate for members' rights.

Formerly the Young Workers Chair on the Board, Fred Shilson moves into a new position as a member-at-large. He brings a wealth of experience within CUPE Ontario and from CUPE 79. He will continue to be a fierce advocate for members, young workers and public services.

“We can build up a vibrant economy that works for everyone”



Just days away from a provincial election that could see her elected premier, Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath sent greetings to convention delegates via a video message, telling them, “We can

elect a government that makes it easier for you to deliver great services... We can do so much better and we are going to do it together.”

NDP leader Jagmeet Singh then took the stage.

Singh began by crediting CUPE and other activists with “turning the tide” on the Wynne government over the sale of Hydro One. He then turned to warning of the damage that would come if Doug Ford and the Conservatives were to win the election. “Cutting \$6 billion from public services will mean a lot of job cuts,” he said.

Describing it as one of the biggest issues facing the electorate, Singh addressed growing inequality.

“We’re seeing people become more and more uncertain about their future... Ipsos-Reed put out a report that found that the majority of Canadians – 51% ...feel like they’re just \$200 away from losing it all... because decisions have been made to increase inequality. In the last year, 80% of the wealth generated went to the top – guess who? – 1%.

“Now you’ve got an incredible opportunity. For the first time in my life, I can say the strategic vote in this campaign – if you want a progressive government; the strategic vote – if you want a government that’s going to stand up for workers; the strategic vote - if you want to stop Doug Ford – is for New Democrats!”

positions results in mix of new and familiar faces



Dave Smith



Patrick Hannon



Emmanuel Ansah



Brittney Nisbett



Tracey St. Aubin



Fred Shilson

Equality debate — ‘This is how we move forward’

The pain, fear and guilt that go along with difficult but necessary conversations about race and equality, were cracked open on the convention floor following a presentation of a research report on racial equality within our union.

The report's findings contain some sobering statistics. Only 3.7 percent and 4.5 percent of local CUPE presidents and vice-presidents identify as racialized compared to 15% of members who identify as racialized. In contrast, 60% local CUPE presidents and vice-presidents identify as women compared to 68% of the membership.

“Where we have succeeded in making gains for women within CUPE’s leadership, we still have work to do to make those same gains in representation of racialized members,” said the presenter. “But what this does show is that when we put our minds to it, we can succeed.”

Delegates didn’t shy away from having a frank, honest discussion. At times heated, the discussion was not easy, often forcing delegates and leadership to confront issues of privilege. Where mistakes were made they were acknowledged. “We need to move beyond the

illusion of inclusion,” one delegate told those assembled in the hall.

Another delegate reminded the room of one of our core union principles, ‘an injury to one is an injury to all’, telling delegates that “We need you to understand that we are injured.”

Recognizing that CUPE can and must do better at implementing concrete plans to improve representation of racialized workers, Ontario President Fred Hahn told the room, “I think this is an incredibly important discussion. This is how we move forward as a union.”





Members cheer as Hahn and Rennick are acclaimed to fifth terms



CUPE Ontario members showed their strong support for President Fred Hand and Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick, who were both acclaimed in their positions to roaring applause.

Accepting his fifth term as president, Hahn shared a Liberal attack ad that ran on TV during the Stanley Cup. The ad showed Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath arm in arm with Fred, warning Ontarians of the danger of electing a government that will “give everything to public sector unions.” Cheers erupted from the CUPE crowd.

“So, I think we’ve arrived,” Hahn said. “If the Liberals are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to attack us during the Stanley Cup Finals, we must be doing something right.”

Hahn was joined on stage by his partner Kerry. He recounted that when he became involved in CUPE, “we weren’t a union where the president could invite his same-sex partner on stage and share a

kiss, but we are that union now.”

Family was also the focus for Candace Rennick as she accepted her fifth term as the secretary-treasurer who has been relentless in maintaining the financial health of the union. She took the stage with her son Jackson in her arms and thanked her partner David for the help that has allowed her to juggle family and union life. She also praised the members for supporting her work as an activist for over 20 years.



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