

Dear CUPE retiree,
Hope this finds you well.
Here is my report to the CUPE Ontario board.

In the report I've tried to outline our state of readiness as retirees as we join the fight against the Ford agenda.

Please let me know what you are up to this fall.

Solidarity,
Stephen Seaborn
Retiree Network chair
CUPE Ontario
cupe.on.ca/retirees-network

1. CUPE retiree-members in Ontario are joining the fight against cuts to and privatization of public services.

Some have retired since our May convention and have asked the Network Chair how best to exercise their retiree-member status. I've been pretty clear in my response.

Among previous waves of retirees there are those who, like myself, have maintained ties to our locals and are **totally pissed** at what Ford is doing to our former workplaces, our friends and the working class across our province.

We've been drawn back into CUPE's fightback by our disgust, our anger and our outrage at the havoc being inflicted by the Ford regime. Each new wave of cuts triggers our reengagement with our union.

2. Free Collective Bargaining.

A surprisingly significant number of us first met CUPE during our own workplace organizing.

Others remember the stories of struggle told by our parents and grandparents.

Our Retirees Network are beginning to engage the rich reserve of CUPE retirees. to protect our public services. Some examples:

- Retiree-members across the province are supporting our union on picket lines, at rallies and in key local and CUPE Ontario campaigns.
- Our largest Childrens Aid local has amended it's by-laws and now elects a retiree-member rep to sit on it's executive.
- A local in eastern Ontario regularly calls upon their retiree-members for help in order to cope with the volume of demands on the local in it's day to day work.
- Both the Toronto and Niagara District Councils have placed a retiree-member rep on their executive boards and convenes retiree-members meetings.

- Durham's district council funds regular retirees' coffee meetings as a way of connecting with their retiree-members.
- A local in Northern Ontario has sent their recently retired Vice President to this CUPE Ontario convention.
- A municipal local in Toronto provides a budget to their Retiree Committee in order to recognize each member who is retiring from the workforce.
- At this year's conference the Ontario University Workers Coordinating Committee examined how CUPE National could mobilize retiree-members across the country by adopting the CUPE Ontario model of constitutional amendments.
- An increasing number of other CUPE locals across Ontario are realizing that they can send a retiree-member to convention who can sit with their delegation. The registration fee will be waived and the retiree-member has voice (but no vote).

These initiatives are awesome. To engage retiree-members as we build the resistance to Ford's anti-worker government is to tap into a wealth of knowledge, experience and determination within our membership and the broader working class.

There are also many more ways to accelerate our union's retiree engagement in the year ahead. Some examples:

- Elected leaders, staff, district councils and sectoral committees can initiate steps to ensure that CUPE in Ontario is an age-friendly union.
- Since most retirees in Ontario don't yet realize that they remain members of CUPE after retiring from their workplace, stepping up promotion of retiree-members' engagement will be crucial.
- Retiree-members can be actively recruited to join CUPE Ontario's campaigns against Ford's dangerous privatization schemes as each of these are rolled out.
- Locals can collect contact information for all members before and shortly after they retire and share this with their Secretary and with our Retirees Network (retireesnetwork@cupe.on.ca).
- Local executives can invite retiree-members to join in the local's social activities, support strike lines, attend membership meetings and join their local union in Ontario-wide campaigns to protect public services.
- CUPE Ontario and our locals can help position retiree-members in a state of readiness for any attempt by the Ford government to amend the Ontario Pensions Benefits Act.
- Sectoral committees and councils of unions can consider the inclusion of retiree-members from their sector in conferences and on their boards.
- Staff reps can remind each of our 850 locals of their rights (and responsibilities) with regard to retiree-members. Everything from supplying retiree-member cards to sending one retiree-member delegate to convention can be undertaken.
- CUPE Ontario communications can amplify the visibility of our retiree-members during sectoral conferences, conventions and schools.
- Recognition of the intersection of the equity objectives of our union with retiree-members' issues can strengthen our understanding of the ways certain of our members face barriers to continuing their contribution of our union.

- The Ontario Federation of Union Retirees (where our Retiree-Members Network chair is a board member) can assist us in actively advocating for retirees and learning how various unions promote retiree activism.
- Our link to the International Federation on Aging can help CUPE Ontario to tap into the support of retirees by the UN Human Rights Council and its call for a “UN convention on the protection of human rights of people as they age”.

Submitted in solidarity.

Stephen Seaborn