
Stephen Seaborn
Representative - Retirees Members Network



Communications

Our Network of CUPE Ontario retirees is reaping some excellent photos of retiree members. Keep 'em comin'. (Our communication folk want more to pop into materials for retiree engagement in our campaigning as we come out of the pandemic.)

Campaigning

Retirees act out. Indigenous Circle chairperson and hospital worker, Joanne Webb with Local 1 hydro worker-activist, Logan Sellethurai caught campaigning to protect and expand healthcare.



Retired Local 5167 municipal worker, Ed Thomas is his Local's rep to Hamilton's Labour Council and also the 1st winner of CUPE's Literacy Award to mark the tenth anniversary of CUPE's National literacy campaign.

Human Rights

Some of our Network members joined me early this month in a seminar outlining the UN's system of "universal periodic reviews" (UPRs) which examine our Government's human rights record.

Because Ageism is a "Protected Ground" under the Ontario Human Rights Code, there has been interest within the Retirees Network, especially with the situation a good number of our members have been facing over the past month.

We can expect that the post-pandemic era will see the rights of CUPE Retiree members taking a significant hit. Most of what we took for granted pre COVID-19 will be under serious attack as the pandemic winds down.

Public policy post-COVID-19

How many CUPE retirees (50, 100, 500, more?) have perished during this pandemic?
Many in long term care facilities around the province.
We'll probably never know.

So many of us are dreading what's in store for our kids' (and our kids' kids). We and our parents have lived through the biggest epidemics: the 1918 Canada-wide flu, polio, scarlet fever, TB, AIDS, SARS.

We've seen this film before and it does not end well. Especially for working class folks. Once again we're in the grips of a terrible globalized "war". Seeing the concern for parents in retirement homes and the outpouring of generosity from perfect strangers, we know that this is no time to feel defeated. Or disengaged.

From where we sit as retired CUPE members, it's looking increasingly likely that we're heading right into the eye of an economic storm. Something even more severe than the Great Depression of the 1930s.

"Never let a good crisis go to waste", said Rahm Emanuel, White House chief of staff during the massive corporate bailout of 2008. - Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*

Of course, Mr Ford is going to bail out his friends on Bay Street by shifting obscene amounts of cash; after-all they're who got him elected in the first place.

*When the system crashes
It's working class asses
on the line.*

CUPE leaders love giving advice and CUPE retirees even more so. From my own small survey, here's what retired members are saying:

- ✦ *"The time has come to put all long-term care facilities under the wing of the Province of Ontario with 100% public employee staffing. Now's the time to stop this part-time thing. Otherwise LTC workers and city health employees become the vectors for us when we have to move into the seniors homes."*
- ✦ *"I suppose that the lesson of the PPE debacle is we've got to tell Ontario's manufacturers to make these things locally."*
- ✦ *"We need to deliver hope to our next generation of CUPE members."*
- ✦ *"Shouldn't our MPPs use their emergency powers to bring in the dollars from Corporate Canada that we're going to need for the economic recovery? Jack up their corporate tax. They've got the cash. We need it. Simple math."*
- ✦ *"Stop transferring good Ontario jobs to low wage countries. GM factories have got to retool their plants and begin training our kids for green jobs!"*
- ✦ *"For godsake amend Ontario's Labour Relations Act to end the use of temp agencies!"*

- ✦ *Please invite us, all the retirees, to stand shoulder to shoulder at Queens Park with our locals.”*
- ✦ *“Jail us. We don’t give a sweetfuck. We’ve got time to spare.”*
- ✦ *“CUPE is big. We can trigger a rising tide of resistance.”*

Engagement

As it turns out, the task of ferreting out retirees in our locals across Ontario isn’t all that impossible. We just need to hit the places where we tend to congregate.



Retired L3904 sessional instructor, Dennis Bartels, seen here with fellow climate activists, is an authority on climate disruption.

“How we recover and rebuild in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis won’t just have ramifications for people alive today, but will dictate what kind of a chance generations to come will have in the face of climate change.”

-stand.earth



OFL convention delegates, retired L4400 education worker, Katie McGovern seen here with a former OFL VP and now retired L1281 cultural worker, Stephen Seaborn.

Networking

We have postponed the Ontario Federation of Union Retirees Convention to 2021. However, CUPE’s seat on the OFUR board continues to provide some innovative retiree engagement strategies and cross-union support from both OFL affiliates and Unifor for our “*Communities, Not Cuts*” agenda.



Sister Suzanne Clancy, OFUR president