



Social Service Workers Coordinating Committee (SSWCC)

Spring 2021 Newsletter

What's in this newsletter:



Letter from Social Services Sector Chair, Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam

The pandemic has had a monumental impact on social services. Read more about the impacts and our collective next steps on the following page.



Ontario Budget Analysis

CUPE has summarized key points on the Ontario budget and how it will impact social services.

[Read More](#)



Ontario Works Reforms

Employment services privatization has occurred in three regions and we are evaluating impacts on members and service delivery.

[See our Next Steps](#)



Child Care Budget Updates

With centre closures, CUPE is disappointed that the Ford government did not prioritize making child care accessible, affordable, and universal.

[Take Action](#)



Collective Bargaining

The economic impacts of COVID-19 and a lack of provincial investment in social services have presented real challenges at the bargaining table.

[See the Trends](#)



Campaign Updates

Learn more about our political action work and find ways you can ignite social change.

[Read More](#)



Letter from Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam

Chair of CUPE Ontario's Social Services Sector

Dear Members,

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks for your hard work and dedication during these truly challenging times. With COVID-19 vaccinations beginning to deploy across the province, we are reminded that the light of the end of the tunnel is shining brighter. As Ontario continues its vaccine roll-out, we continue to advocate for frontline workers to receive vaccination priority. We are also calling on the Ford government to acknowledge and respect frontline workers by providing much needed, permanent funding to ensure the sustainability and longevity of the important services we provide.

We have much work to do to preserve and enhance the social services sector in a post-COVID-19 era. With monumental deficits impacting municipalities, our province, and country, we anticipate waves of public service cuts, possible job loss, accelerated transformation and threats of privatization.

We have already witnessed, for the first time in over a decade, the permanent closure of 58 child

care programs across the province; the recession of day programs for adults with developmental disabilities; modernization processes in municipal social services, such as Ontario Works, that often leads to workforce adjustments; and a provincial budget that does little to address the serious underfunding of services that Ontarians need now more than ever.

Together, I know we will rise up and defend our members and protect our services from efforts to undermine and diminish high-quality public services. In these uncertain times collectively we can support one another, foster resilience and solidarity and demand better.

Solidarity Always,

Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam



Ontario Budget Analysis

It is no surprise that the provincial budget was full of disappointments.

There was nothing for truly transformational initiatives like legislated paid sick leave, accessible and affordable housing, or adequate investment in social assistance.

There was very little new funding for the sector as a whole. There are very few and small pots of funding made available for some programming and capital projects, but the Ford government clearly does not envision any type of social services response as an antidote to challenges of the pandemic.

Unfortunately, the Ford Conservatives funding commitments fall far short of what's needed to address some of the serious funding shortfalls that compromise our members' ability to deliver high-quality public services.

The following are some of the new budget announcements:

- **\$175M more for mental health and addictions programming** in acknowledgement of those struggling because of COVID-19. For reference, the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health's annual budget in Toronto is about \$370M. Although some of our sectors may benefit from the new programming funding, details on the new spending are unclear.
- **The creation of four mobile mental health clinics** that will begin operation in summer 2021 to serve remote, rural, and underserved communities. For reference, the provincial riding of Kenora Rainy River is about the size of France.
- **\$8.4M over three years for urgent mental health crisis care.** Similar to a pilot project in Toronto, this will divert calls from police to other services and will be housed with the OPP. The contradiction of housing a diversion program with a police force is not explored and no further details were available on the program.
- An additional \$2.1M over 3 years for those dealing with domestic abuse and for survivors of human trafficking.
- Instead of committing any new money to supportive housing, the budget has narrative that blames the federal government for lowering the amount of funding available through the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit funding program. The following was included in the budget:
 - **\$255M to municipal service managers and Indigenous agencies** to respond to COVID-19 shelter challenges; this is part of the Social Services Relief Fund.
 - **\$18.5 million over three years for the Transitional Housing Support Program**, to support victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.
 - **\$13 million over three years to assist people with developmental disabilities** in accessing community housing.
 - **A 20% increase to the tax cut CARE benefit for child care.** This raises the average benefit from \$1,250 to \$1,500 and will cost about \$75M. Total spending will be about \$980M with a \$55M increase in 2021/22.



Ontario Budget Analysis (continued)

On COVID-19 supports:

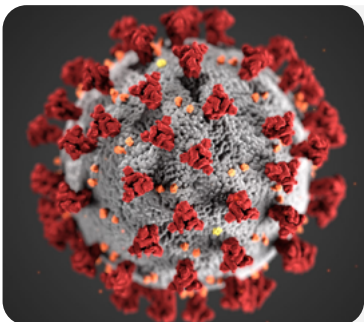
- A supply of rapid antigen tests to congregate care settings.
- As part of the existing \$1.4B outlay Supply Ontario has been set up as a procurement agency for PPE.
- An additional \$50M aimed at the governments High Priority Communities Strategy in 15 priority neighbourhoods in Durham, Peel, Toronto, York, and Ottawa. This is basically matching funding to existing resources for COVID-19 hotspots to help with outreach, shelter, and case management in high need communities. It may be likely some of our community agencies administer this funding. For reference, Toronto has over 30 high need communities alone - the new and existing funds are meant to cover some 8M residents.



Ontario Works Reforms

We continue to monitor the effects of various service delivery reforms. The privatization of employment services has been rolled out in three regions including Peel, Kawartha Lakes, and Niagara, and we are waiting on data to begin evaluating how that is working.

There is also reorganization happening with a central intake system and the provincial government beginning to take on work roles previously performed by our members. We also continue to engage with our locals on these reforms, but there is no significant news right now. If you are a member of a municipal social service local impacted by reforms, contact your stewards with your questions and concerns.



COVID-19: CUPE Resources for Members

Explore helpful resources including health and safety practices, income supports for workers and students during the pandemic, recent media releases, and more. Read more at www.cupe.ca/covid-19.



Childcare Budget Updates

The Ontario budget did nothing to advance a robust and accessible child care system and now hopes are pinned on the federal budget, which should be released on April 19, 2021. Finance Minister Friedland has indicated there will be action on this file and the sector is hoping for funding to set up a Quebec-style system to make child care affordable and available.

Activists have been pushing for system that expands public and non-profit care with direct investment. CUPE has developed a toolkit available in French and English so that you can take action with your MPP and MP to demand better from our governments and create an affordable and accessible system. The kit will be sent out and is available here: [link](#).



Collective Bargaining

There are real and present challenges to current bargaining. While we are still seeing the regular issues without bargaining face-to-face, the constraints of the economy and of Bill 124 are a problem. Over the last three months, CUPE agreements have an average settlement rate of 1.14%. Although this is a small basket of agreements this is reflective of Bill 124 agencies, with one settlement at 0.5%. Some of the municipal social service income support units pulled the average up with Peel Region achieving a 1.75% increase.

Overall, the province is not that much farther ahead—all settlements, both public and private, in the first quarter of 2021 averaged 1.2%. Many CUPE social service units are classified as the broader public sector; this sectors average is at 1%. A basic measure of the cost of living, the Consumer Price Index, is at 1.1%, essentially keeping pace with wages.

Campaign Updates



Restore Developmental Services Day Programs

CUPE Local 4392 has achieved a major victory in their campaign to Restore Day Programs. After mounting pressure from family members and caregivers of adults with developmental disabilities, in coordination with the local, the employer has decided to re-open programs and conduct more fulsome consultation before making future program changes.

[Sign the Letter](#)



Paid Sick Days Save Lives

With workplace transmissions making up a bulk of the rise in COVID-19 cases, a growing consensus is saying that workers – primarily low-wage, front-line workers – are less likely to stay home when sick if they aren't ensured an income to pay for groceries, rent, and other essentials.

[Tell Doug Ford to Take Action](#)



Support Community Mental Health and Addictions Workers

It's time for our government to invest in community mental health and addictions services and to develop a plan to address the increasing number of individuals who need support. Without immediate government intervention, more than 80 CUPE Local 4891 members at Regeneration Community Services may be forced to strike.

[Sign the Petition](#)



New Child Care E-Action

Thanks to the dedication of frontline workers in child care, families across our province are able to work, attend school, and enjoy high-quality learning and care environments.

CUPE joins the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) and the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (AECEO) to demand that the Ford government protect and respect early childhood education and care.

[Take Action Now](#)



SSWCC Contacts

Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam | Chair

CUPE Local 503
clpoolecotnam@gmail.com

Joanne Smithers | Developmental Services Rep

CUPE Local 4392
local4392@yahoo.ca

Janis Thompson | Developmental Services Rep

CUPE Local 2936-02
janistcupe@gmail.ca

Aubrey Gonsalves | Children's Aid Society Rep

CUPE Local 2316
president@cupe2316.ca

Nancy Simone | Children's Aid Society Rep

CUPE Local 2190
president@cupe2190.ca

Heather Murray | Children's Aid Society Rep

CUPE Local 3223
cupe3223president@gmail.com

Kim Gilbert | Child Care Rep

CUPE Local 543.4
kim_sharp@hotmail.com

Athina Basiliadis | Child Care Rep

CUPE Local 2204
athina.basiliadis@gmail.com

Carolyn Ferns | Child Care Rep

CUPE Local 2484-25
fern.carolyn@gmail.com

Rae-Anne Scratch | Community Agencies Rep

CUPE Local 4523
raeofsun71@hotmail.com

Alexis Tseng-Chung | Community Agencies Rep

CUPE Local 3798
ahching.tseng@gmail.com

Susan Specht | Municipal Social Services Rep

CUPE Local 4705
chambersingingsoprano@yahoo.ca

Bill Smith | Municipal Social Services Rep

CUPE Local 126
imthebill@gmail.com

Bonnie Cobb-LaCroix | Municipal Social Services Rep

CUPE Local 1883
rnrparents4@yahoo.ca

Denise Belanger | Injured Workers Rep

CUPE Local 4705
recordingsecretary_4705@cupesudbury.org

Tammy VanDyk | Health and Safety Rep

CUPE Local 2936
brite.smiles@hotmail.com

Rebecca Punkari | Local 1750 Rep

CUPE Local 1750
rpunkari@oceu.ca

Katarina Knezovic | Equity and Inclusion Rep

CUPE Local 181
katarinalocal181@gmail.com