

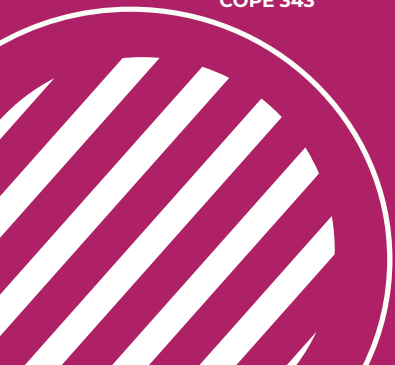


DRAFT ACTION PLAN

VIRTUAL CONVENTION 2021



COPE 343



Public Services Save Lives

1. The 2021 Action Plan comes at a historic time for CUPE and for Ontario. We are still in an unprecedented global pandemic. Despite the prospect of brighter days ahead posed by vaccines, we must acknowledge that our world has changed forever.
2. COVID-19 exposed the fault lines in our society. The pandemic created a public health crisis and deeply intensified pre-existing social and economic crises. Lower income workers lost their jobs in larger numbers than higher income employees. Women faced a 'she-cession'—disproportionately facing unemployment and financial hardship. Chronic inequities led to higher rates of infection and death among racialized Ontarians. The pandemic revealed how years of underfunding and neglect have stretched public services to the breaking point. We cannot go back on the deadly path we were on before.
3. At the same time, the pandemic gave Ontarians a renewed appreciation of the value of public services and the work of CUPE members. Whether it was the work we continued to do on the front lines protecting the health and well-being of our communities, or our absence when services delivered by our health care, school board, university, social service, and municipal workers was interrupted, public consciousness has been raised about the critical role of the public sector.
4. The pandemic highlighted the heroism of the workers who deliver the services we depend on daily, but employers and governments failed in their duty to

“The fundamental truth that public services save lives has been vindicated.”

protect them. With the discovery and distribution of vaccines our province is now at a crossroads. CUPE members have long warned of the deadly effects of austerity. The fundamental truth that public services save lives has been vindicated. But before long, Liberal and Conservative governments will face budgetary crises of their own

making. Ever reluctant to tax the rich, they will impose further austerity measures and will try to balance their budgets on the backs of the workers who carried us through this catastrophe. We must be ready to resist.

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5. There is another path: learning from our past mistakes and finally achieving the social and economic democracy Ontarians deserve. What follows is our Action Plan to realize that democracy in our workplaces and our province.

Pandemic Relief & Recovery

6. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to reach new levels of destruction and death. The vaccination campaign is painfully slow. Unemployment remains high, families are struggling with child care, and the health and safety of workers remains threatened. Our health and long-term care systems are buckling under the pressure and doctors in some regions may be forced to make devastating decisions on who will and will not get medical care. Schools are rife with infections, universities are facing massive financial challenges, social services are facing child care, youth justice, and developmental service program closures and job losses. Tens of thousands of municipal and airline workers are laid off. Ontarians need immediate relief.

CUPE Ontario Will:

7. Ramp up our demands for additional funding for public service delivery, including maintaining levels of service, providing resources to adjust to the new reality due to COVID-19, and reinstating workers who lost their jobs due to this crisis. This is a matter of life and death for our communities.
8. Work with coalition partners to continue to push the province to dramatically expedite the timetable to implement a 4-hour minimum care standard in order to actually make a difference in the lives of seniors in the long-term care system right now. Our loved ones can't wait.
9. Work with OCHU and the Ontario Health Coalition to push governments to take action to increase hospital funding to address the critical shortage of hospital

"We will take action to make sure government puts care before profits."

beds and staff in Ontario - the lowest anywhere in the world with a developed economy - and ensure that publicly owned and operated hospitals are used to clear the huge backlog of surgeries and procedures.

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10. Push to have the current clinical triage protocols changed to remove those sections which blatantly discriminate against people with disabilities and support ARCH Disability Law Centre and other groups challenging this protocol.
11. Vociferously fight against any proposed changes to the *Health Care Consent Act* which would allow physicians to issue do not resuscitate (DNR) orders against patient or family wishes.
12. Push the province to drop all plans to merge land ambulance and public health units so we are never caught unprepared again.
13. Work with OCHU, other health care unions, the Ontario Health Coalition and others to end profit in care once and for all by continuing our campaign to eliminate for-profit provision of long-term care, continuing to oppose P3 hospitals and private surgical centres and fighting to end the privatization of all health services.
14. Push for widespread and recurring rapid testing for all essential workers to curtail the spread of this disease.
15. Work for safe schools with small classrooms and well ventilated, properly maintained school buildings.
16. Support locals and CUPE members on the front lines to have pandemic pay provided to all staff, not just some front-line staff.
17. Push for a comprehensive, strictly voluntary vaccination roll out which is available to all Ontario residents regardless of their immigration status and accompanied by appropriate public education, accessible public delivery, and paid time off for workers to get vaccinated. Any public sector or private sector worker who is required to work with others must be vaccinated as a priority

A Recovery for Those Hit Hardest

18. Ontarians have not all weathered the storm of COVID-19 in the same boat. Over one third of Ontarians earning under \$35,000 per year lost their jobs. Employment has still not recovered for this group. Women were forced to leave the labour force in droves as child care centres closed and schools went to online learning. People with disabilities also saw disproportionate job losses and were often unable, due to closures, to access the services and supports they

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rely on. Young workers experienced great job losses. LGBTQ2S+ communities have also been negatively and disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Those who find themselves at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities are especially impacted. At the same time, individuals earning the highest incomes saw net job growth over the past year. Thousands of small businesses suffered and shuttered, while the Extencicares, the Loblaws and the Walmarts racked up huge profits.

"COVID-19 & racism are intertwined pandemics."

19. The COVID-19 pandemic has been most devastating in communities already ravaged by European colonization and anti-black racism. Black, racialized and indigenous communities make up a higher portion of essential workers in dangerous

precarious jobs and are more likely to face housing insecurity. Statistics Canada reports that death rates from the virus are double in neighbourhoods where more than 25 per cent of people are racialized.

20. Additionally, COVID-19 arrived at a time of heightened white supremacy. It fuelled further hate targeting people of Asian descent. It is clear that anti-Black racism is another public health crisis that has gone unaddressed for years. Ultimately, we cannot hope to combat COVID-19 without also resisting racism.

CUPE Ontario Will:

21. In partnership with the Raise the Rates coalition, we will fight poverty by supporting a minimum 55% increase to social assistance rates.

22. Push to have the social assistance appeals tribunals fully staffed with competent and experienced adjudicators to clear the backlog of social assistance appeals.

23. Continue to call for the ethical collection and release of COVID-19 demographic data—including race-based data—and data on testing, infections, and deaths while recognizing the need to protect the identity of migrants by ensuring that no information about migrants is shared with immigration enforcement. Science matters. Data matters.

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Child Care

24. With the release of the federal budget earlier in April, child care advocates in Ontario are celebrating the federal commitment to early learning and child care. CUPE Ontario, and our coalition partners are also sending a strong message to Premier Ford to accept federal leadership on child care and work cooperatively to build a real system of early learning and child care for families. The child care commitment in the federal budget is a lifeline for Ontario's families, educators and the child care sector. Now is time for all levels of government to work together, across party lines, to support the child care sector and build an affordable, accessible, not-for-profit system of early learning and care.

CUPE Ontario Will:

25. Advance a child care community campaign that engages members, coalition partners, parents, the broader labour movement and advocacy organizations to demand the implementation of our child care vision using this federal partnership and funding in Ontario. Our vision for a real child care system includes:

- i. The expansion of public and not-for-profit centres to ensure accessibility for all children to have access to a high-quality early learning and child care space;
- ii. New funding for the child care sector that addresses current staffing needs, ensures a \$25 per hour minimum wage for workers, and alleviates recruitment and retention issues that have impacted this sector for decades;
- iii. Advocacy for a truly universal early learning and care system with this operating funding and shifting the reliance away from parent-fees while recognizing that affordable fees for families is a stepping-stone to that goal;
- iv. A rebuilt Ontario child care sector that makes a real difference for families, for educators, and for a generation of young children who deserve to look to a brighter future.

Protecting Public Services & the People Who Provide Them

Concerted Political Action

“We will need concerted political action to avoid another devastating round of austerity.”

26. CUPE members are the backbone of the services they deliver. When the COVID-19 pandemic ends, all levels of government will feel pressure to address rising budget deficits. CUPE Ontario has consistently pointed out that Ontario doesn't have a spending problem—it has a revenue problem. Municipalities are severely constrained in their revenue generating tools while right-wing Liberal and Conservative provincial governments rarely hesitate to put corporate profits before people. We will need concerted political action to avoid another devastating round of austerity and privatization.

27. Ontario is scheduled to go to the polls in June 2022 - one year from now. There are indications that the Ford Conservatives may call an early election.

28. The federal minority Liberals could go to the polls at any time and are also likely to call an election within the next year. The funds provided (or not provided) by the Canadian government are vital to the operating of our provincial and municipal public services. CUPE members rely on woefully inadequate federal income programs that need improvement and tax policies which establish the distribution of wealth are primarily set at the federal level. The Federal election too will be very important.

29. Ford failed Ontario. It is clear in the numbers of COVID-19 deaths in Long Term Care, it is clear in a public health rollout that failed to provide appropriate PPE to front-line workers, and in their failure to provide the needed supports for hospitals, long-term care, schools, social services, municipalities, and universities to operate safely.

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CUPE Ontario Will:

30. Mobilize all available resources to ensure that the Ford Conservatives are not re-elected. But our efforts cannot focus on this goal alone. It was years of Liberal austerity and tax cuts that undermined our public services when we need them most. Only the Ontario NDP will fight for the future we deserve.
31. Support the Municipal sector to work with coalition partners on a candidate search, mobilization and the election of local politicians who promote public services and protect public sector workers.
32. Work with municipal locals, OMECC and coalition partners to fight Liberal and Conservative policies which promote P3's and the privatization of municipal services. For example, the Canada Infrastructure Bank at the federal level and the Ontario government's Blue Box transition program are poised to capitalize on the pandemic by forcing financially devastated municipalities into privatization ventures.
33. Work with CUPE locals and CUPE National and coalition partners to pressure all levels of government to increase taxes on profitable corporations and on rich individuals. Further we will push all governments to pursue other policies that transfer wealth and resources from the wealthy to every-day Ontarians and the public services they depend on.

CUPE Locals Will:

34. Actively connect with and support their local New Democratic Party (NDP) riding associations.
35. Engage in upcoming federal, provincial, municipal, school board trustee and regional elections by mobilizing members and resources, along with coalition partners, towards the election of NDP MPPs and MPs at the provincial and federal level and candidates that share CUPE values of inclusivity and promote public services at the municipal and school board trustee level.

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Fighting Precarious Work

36. The pandemic highlighted the dangers of a society that disregards the needs of women, disabled, LGBTQ2S+, young, and racialized workers. We discovered that if we did not protect and support our marginalized and precarious workers, the virus would spread. No one is safe unless everyone is safe.
37. Sadly, CUPE workplaces are not immune to these issues. Years of chronic underfunding has fostered the use of casual, part time, temporary, and relief workers who are inadequately paid and do not have access to the sick leave and benefits of other CUPE members. Members with disabilities do not have access to proper workplace supports.
38. Shoring up workplace protections helps all our members and the public at large. Some issues can be addressed at the bargaining table but require an enormous effort to achieve success. Some can only be placed squarely at the foot of the Ontario government to legislate improvements.

CUPE Ontario Will:

39. Support sectors and bargaining councils to develop and promote concrete bargaining demands to convert part time and precarious jobs to full time and permanent positions.
40. Encourage locals, sectoral bargaining committees and bargaining councils to look at how equity issues intersect with precarious work with a view to developing bargaining proposals that address the needs of precarious workers in their sector.
41. CUPE Ontario will work actively to push any pension plans, like OMERS, which have barriers to part time participation to drop those barriers and will undertake a campaign to encourage part time employees to join these plans.
42. Push the Ontario government to take responsibility for the fiscal health of our public institutions. Also, work with CUPE National to have the *Companies Creditor's Arrangement Act* amended so that it does not apply to the public sector.

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CUPE Locals Will:

43. Raise membership awareness of issues surrounding precarious work and the connections between our precarious colleagues, government underfunding and workloads.
44. Actively support and promote bargaining demands that address the collective agreement needs of our members working in precarious jobs. This would include supporting the development of such bargaining priorities through their sector coordinating committee or bargaining council, and conducting strategic workplace bargaining campaigns to achieve tangible improvements to their collective agreements for our members in precarious jobs.
45. Recognizing that equity and precarity go hand in hand, locals will conduct a review of their workplaces to develop a set of bargaining proposals that address the precarity of their members by addressing the needs of women, racialized, Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+ workers and workers with disabilities.

Properly Valuing Workers Through Pay

CUPE Ontario Will:

46. Recognizing that years of austerity has resulted in all public sector wages falling behind, CUPE Ontario will work with locals to pressure governments and employers to achieve real wage increases for our members with a particular focus on ensuring the wages of marginalized and precarious workers are raised to living levels.
47. Work with coalition partners to fight for a raise in the minimum wage to \$20 per hour effective immediately and indexed increases every year thereafter.
48. Pursue public campaigns and legal challenges to repeal Bills 47, 124, and 195, remove all restrictions on free and fair collective bargaining and remedy all violations of our members' rights, in addition to challenging their provisions directly at the bargaining table.
49. Reinforce our solidarity with our comrades in other unions in both the public and the private sectors to secure gains for all workers.

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Providing Paid Sick Leave & Other Workplace Illness Protections

CUPE Ontario Will:

50. Fight to have COVID-19 declared a presumptive illness by WSIB.
51. Fight to have all workplaces covered by WSIB. Furthermore, we will fight to end deeming, reverse cuts to premiums, and increase payments to injured workers to ensure the public system is strong and sustainable and does not rely on condemning injured workers to poverty.
52. Provide support to locals bargaining WSIB coverage into their collective agreements.
53. Move to have a minimum of 10 paid sick days for every worker and an additional 14 paid sick days during a public health emergency enshrined in the Employment Standards Act.
54. Fight for the recognition of PTSD presumptive workplaces hard hit by COVID-19 and support beyond WSIB to deal with the mental health crisis among workers as a result of the pandemic.
55. Develop a tool kit for locals to implement strategies on how to deal with sick leave issues among our bargaining unit members who are part-time casual and relief employees. Furthermore, we will support all sectors and bargaining councils to ensure these issues are part of coordinated bargaining proposals.

Shoring Up Workplace Health & Safety Protections

CUPE Ontario Will:

56. Pressure the government to prioritize the health and safety of workers under Ontario's COVID-19 response framework and demand that government fully consult and incorporate workers in all regional reopening decisions.
57. Fight for an increase in the number of health and safety inspections and inspectors. We will also campaign to educate workers on their right to refuse unsafe work.

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58. Build on the work already being done by some sectors and bargaining councils to insist on a comprehensive inventory and audit of access to personal protective equipment in all workplaces.
59. Provide for support to locals to ensure they have active health and safety committees and access to health and safety training and resources.

Locals Will:

60. Commit to ensuring that their Joint Health and Safety Committees are active, with a full roster of trained, knowledgeable union representatives.
61. Work with CUPE National and CUPE Ontario to support their workplace Joint Health and Safety Committees to get the resources they need to protect their membership.

Fighting for the Future We Deserve

Dismantling Racism in Our Workplaces, Society, & Union

62. This pandemic has thrown a spotlight on the inequities in our society and the risk they pose to all of us. The essential service work of the pandemic is disproportionately done by women and racialized people. What is abundantly clear is that our racialized communities have suffered the most. COVID19 is not the only public health emergency in Ontario. As a society we need to formally recognize how racism harms many Ontarians and divert the necessary attention and resources into fighting it.
63. Many marginalized communities often experience prejudice, bias and indifference when accessing front line services. The government needs to allocate specific funds so that all agencies can have access to the resources necessary to offer much need training to front-line staff that deliver public services.
64. The events of the past few years, the failure of the RCMP to deal with missing and murdered indigenous women, the police shootings of racialized youth and horrific examples of brutality against those with mental health illnesses has highlighted how our public safety system is broken in Ontario and in Canada.

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CUPE Ontario Will:

65. Continue to fight for the recognition of anti-Black racism as a public health crisis.
66. Fight to restore and increase the funding to the Ontario Human Rights Commission and for the appointment of competent experienced adjudicators to fill the growing number of Board vacancies to deal with the huge and growing backlog of cases and for a public system to represent workers in this process.
67. Lobby the government to restore and increase funding to the Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate and its sub-committees and make all of its reports public.
68. Pressure the government to mandate the creation of a committee under the Anti-Racism Directorate that would have inter-ministerial connections and responsibilities for concrete actions to mitigate this public health crisis.
69. Push for the introduction of equity, anti-harassment, and anti-discrimination training for all government funded agencies and institutions.
70. Fight for a reallocation of resources away from police services towards a restructured public safety model and increased spending on housing and social services generally and mental health supports in particular.
71. Urge CUPE National to echo our calls against anti-Black racism at the federal level.
72. Continue to pursue the implementation of the CUPE Ontario Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan in order to root out racism in our union's structures and spaces.

CUPE Locals Will:

73. Pursue their own anti-racism organizational action plan to combat racism in their own structures. Their plans should include reviews of current by-laws in order to identify systemic racism, strategies to move equity-seeking members into positions of union leadership, and ways to expand the capacity of the local by fostering ongoing attendance of black, indigenous and racialized members at union skills training workshops.

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Protecting our Environment for Future Generations

74. CUPE Ontario recognizes and acknowledges the gravity of environmental and climate change as a major, if not the greatest threat, before our members, society, humanity, and earth itself.
75. Public sector jobs are green jobs. They are carbon neutral jobs. Increasing hiring in the broader public sector not only deals with the massive over-work problem and lack of support for our services, but it's also a fundamental part of just transition. We must likewise ensure publicly funded training is available to help workers who are currently in carbon intensive work, that is killing our planet, to take on jobs that will enrich our communities and sustain our collective futures.

CUPE Ontario Will:

76. Enhance its environmental work by creating an environment committee.
77. Resist initiatives contrary to the well-being of the environment, especially those proposed or supported by government, in particular the provincial government, and will effect positive coalitions, with groups seeking to restore, preserve and promote the well-being of the environment.
78. Call out provincial and federal governments to finally fix the water crisis in indigenous communities. All members and locals are encouraged to contact their MPs and MPPS to that effect.
79. Resist and raise awareness about the impact of environmental racism on Indigenous and racialized communities.
80. Advocate for a ban on single-use plastics and Styrofoam which threaten our waterways, wildlife, and treatment programs.

CUPE Locals Will:

81. Endorse and sign onto CUPE National's Climate Emergency Declaration.

Mobilization Measures

“The economic & social democracy we seek will remain unrealized unless CUPE members mobilize to achieve it.”

82. The economic and social democracy we seek in our workplaces and society will remain unrealized unless CUPE members mobilize to achieve it. What follows is a series of actions to enhance our internal organizing and external coordination to unleash the power of CUPE members across Ontario.

CUPE Ontario Will:

83. Seek to deepen our reach with vulnerable workers—whether living with a disability, racialized, LGBTQ2S+, precariously employed, marginalized, or otherwise. We will seek to track and enhance the participation of vulnerable workers in all campaign actions.

84. Continue to find new ways to engage our members, including leveraging online and electronic tools, to ensure more voices are heard from everywhere in the province and create a stronger and more connected membership.

85. Double our efforts to communicate with and engage other unions, coalition partners, community groups, neighbors, and allies in advancing all local and provincial campaigns.

86. Work with the Canadian Federation of Students, Public Interest Research Groups, and other relevant social justice-based student organizations to combat attacks on students and student services, and support in the development of student organizing and activism through campus coalitions.

87. Support local affiliation to CUPE District Councils and send members of the CUPE Ontario Executive Board out to locals to discuss the benefits of affiliation.

88. Support CUPE locals in efforts to join and participate in the work of municipal and regional labour councils.

89. Actively engage with CUPE National to rebuild the solidarity of the labour movement through the Canadian Labour Congress and strengthen our collective capacity to resist the wave of austerity we know is coming. We will seek

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to array the forces of labour behind clear and consistent demands to enshrine public pharma care, paid sick days, and mental health support in the Canada Health Act.

90. Intensify our efforts to establish an up to date database of local executive and membership contact information, so that meaningful mobilization is more achievable.
91. Continue our efforts from past action plans to create a document that is explicitly an independent labour program, focused on the needs of the working class.

CUPE Locals Will:

92. Affiliate to their regional CUPE District Council and more fully participate in their council's activities in order to foster better regional coordination and mobilization efforts.
93. Join and actively participate in the work of municipal and regional labour councils and the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) in order to build bridges between unions and across the wider labour movement.