

Newsletter

Spring 2023



CUPE Ontario
Pink Triangle
Committee

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triangle rose
du SCFP Ontario

Chair's corner

**A message from Susan Gapka (she/her)
Chair, CUPE Ontario Pink Triangle Committee**

Welcome to the Pink Triangle Committee newsletter.

Our first newsletter is being launched in spring 2023 to coincide with CUPE Ontario's convention and the start of Pride season. We anticipate a follow-up issue in the autumn with a post-Pride round-up. We want these newsletters to enhance communication with our members across the province, between conventions and conferences where networking time is limited and constrained.

As CUPE Ontario's Pink Triangle web page says, the committee "works to create safer, fairer workplaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirited, intersex and queer-identified union members. Through political action and key events, we advocate for harassment-free workplaces and communities. Pink Triangle Committee members are volunteers elected for a two-year term at the biennial CUPE Ontario Human Rights Conference and represent all sectors and regions within CUPE Ontario."

Special thanks to Nancy Hanschmann, Gary Sprague, Dave Butler, Joseph Di Flaviano, Mallory Imrie and Chris Kaspiris for their work on behalf of Pink Triangle's membership. And thanks to Mallory and Joseph for assisting on this newsletter.

Pink Triangle members are looking forward to meeting you in person at the CUPE Ontario convention.

Origins of the Pink Triangle

The pink triangle as a symbol of 2SLGBTQI+ resilience, resistance and liberation has its roots in a terrible period of history. In Nazi Germany, thousands of LGBTQI2S+ people were sent to concentration camps, where gay men were made to wear a pink triangle as a badge of identification. (Lesbians, as "asocial" prisoners, were made to wear black triangles.)

Even after camps were liberated, persecution against 2SLGBTQI+ people continued and many remained detained because of the criminalization of homosexuality at the time.

To commemorate those victims and as a reminder that 2SLGBTQI+ people are still targets for oppression, members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community reclaimed the Pink Triangle as a symbol of pride.

CUPE Ontario's Pink Triangle Committee meets in person for the first time since 2019.

Top row, left to right: Nancy Hanschmann, Chris Kaspiris, Susan Gapka and Gary Sprague.

Bottom row, left to right: Joseph Di Flaviano, Mallory Imrie and Dave Butler.



Spring 2023

It's Pride season!

Pink Triangle looks forward to welcoming our members, allies and supporters as we come together once again for a celebration of resilience in overcoming struggles and for a demonstration of resistance and solidarity on behalf of those who cannot participate.



The committee continues to partner with the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Solidarity and Pride Committee to compile a list of Ontario Pride events for the upcoming 2023 season. This list also informs Pink Triangle's outreach efforts.

There is a special excitement this year, as more Pride celebrations will be in-person and more events are scheduled than ever before. Of special importance to

CUPE Ontario members: Pride Toronto has agreed to have labour groups march together with the OFL contingent in the Pride parade. We've been waiting a long time for a "yes" to this request!

And if you're in Toronto on the June 23-25 weekend, please join us for the Trans March on Friday, the Dyke March on Saturday, and Pride Parade on Sunday.

CUPE Pink Triangle, in partnership with the OFL, Pride Toronto, and Dignity Network, is planning a Labour Pride Human Rights Conference on June 20th in Toronto. In the evening, we will join the AIDS Vigil at Barbara Hall Park outside the 519 Church community centre.

Pink Triangle Committee elections

CUPE Ontario's Human Rights conference takes place from November 28 to December 1 at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto, where a new Pink Triangle Committee will be elected.

Plan to attend the Human Rights conference, but don't wait until then to get involved! We would like to see more engagement with CUPE members and we welcome your participation.

Get to know us

For our first issue, we asked Pink Triangle members Joseph and Mallory to share some of their thoughts and experiences. We look forward to hearing from other committee members in upcoming newsletters.

Joseph Di Flaviano (he/him)

Joseph is a steward with CUPE 786, Equity Committee Chair and Joint Job Evaluation Co-Chair. He works at St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton.

I joined the Pink Triangle Committee in 2020, after a CUPE Ontario email announced there was a vacant seat within the committee. I was instantly intrigued and knew this committee was something I would be proud to put my name to. It would also be a way show other CUPE members that unions do so much more than just bargain collective agreements.



When I joined the committee, I instantly felt welcomed. Our first meeting was on Zoom and Susan Gapka was in my first virtual breakout room. I was nervous, but Susan made me feel at ease. We shared stories about our struggles over the years – the ups, downs and what led us to where we are today. Susan's passion, her draw to political action, were such an inspiration. That conversation sparked a fire inside me, to be a better version of myself and to acknowledge the work that still desperately needs to be done in our community.

CUPE Ontario's Pink Triangle Committee would turn out to be, and remains, an amazing platform to ensure better treatment for the 2SLGBTQ+ community in the workplace, as well as to celebrate and support the diversity of our members across the province of Ontario.

Throughout the pandemic, the committee met virtually and even launched our first Pride webinar, "Celebrating Pride: From Our Struggles

to Our Successes." Also, our new Pink Triangle Award will soon be unveiled, and we have our first newsletter – all new ways our committee is trying to reach and support our 2SLGBTQ+ family within CUPE Ontario.

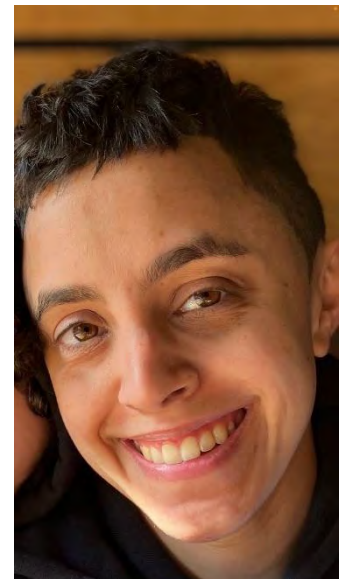
I would like to thank CUPE 786's members and Executive team for the tremendous support they have shown me and our community. As of 2023, I have been able to establish our local's first Equity Committee to support and celebrate the diversity of our members. This was done with complete guidance and support from our executive. With all of that said, I want to thank them on behalf of myself and the diverse members we represent.

Mallory Imrie (she/her)

Mallory is a member of CUPE 7800 and works at Hamilton Health Sciences

I took part in my first Pride parade in 2022 and the experience is still with me. I travelled from Hamilton to Toronto to join the Toronto Pride parade and I really enjoyed the day!

Feelings of excitement filled me, and adrenaline pumped through my veins while I walked alongside everyone else in the parade. The sidewalk was filled with people cheering us on and it was great to be surrounded by people with a similar experience to mine. I knew I was not alone! I was where I felt no judgment, just total acceptance, and where I could be me. The true me!



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Seeing people out and proud of who they are, made me fairly emotional. I was beaming with pride, excited for our ability to express ourselves, and relieved that we could do so safely.

I'm looking forward to taking part again and I'm hoping that we can have greater representation from our CUPE locals. It would be great to see more CUPE members in 2023's Toronto Pride parade.

In memoriam

At our in-person meeting in November 2022, Pink Triangle members held a moment of silence for our lost comrade, Andy McDonald of CUPE 7800 Hospital Division in Hamilton. After a long battle with cancer and other illnesses, Andy sought medical assistance in dying (MAID) and ended his life last November.

When the provincial Conservative government cut funding in 1998 for gender affirming surgery, Andy and retired CUPE 4400 school custodian and former Pink Triangle stalwart Martine Stonehouse were part of a group that took the government to a human rights tribunal. The case was resolved in 2006, yet Andy's claim was not covered, so he appealed and, with help from Trans Lobby Group activists, succeeding in have the funding reinstated for himself and others.

Andy continued to work at Juravinski Hospital, eventually recruiting and mentoring other Pink Triangle Committee members, including current member Mallory Imrie.

We are grateful for Andy's trailblazing advocacy for access for trans health care and for his outstanding courage in the face of adversity. Andy McDonald is fondly remembered by CUPE Ontario's Pink Triangle Committee and we extend our warm wishes to all those who knew and worked with him.



Andy McDonald (far right) at CUPE Ontario's 2017 Human Rights conference. Others pictured (l-r) are keynote speaker Lee Airton, Martine Stonehouse, and Susan Gapka.



Shortly before his death, Andy McDonald shared his personal journey with CHCH news. You can see the entire interview at tinyurl.com/3rsht3da