

Newsletter

Fall 2023



CUPE Ontario
Pink Triangle
Committee

Comité du
triangle rose
du SCFP Ontario

Pride across the province

CUPE members celebrated Pride across the province, beginning in June and attending events into the fall. Thanks to everyone who shared their pictures and helped spread the message of Pride throughout our communities.



Get to know us

Nancy Hanschmann (she/her)

Nancy is a member of CUPE 109 and of the Pink Triangle Committee. She works for the City of Kingston.

I have worked for the City of Kingston for the last 35 years. I am at the Public Works Department, where I'm an assistant supervisor – the first female ever to be hired for this position, in this department.

I work in sports fields in the summer and sidewalk winter control in the winter. I really started getting involved with the union at a CUPE's Women's Conference, where I was elected to the women's committee. I served on it from 2008 to 2014. I was elected to the Pink Triangle Committee in 2011 and have been on the committee ever since. I'm on the CUPE National Pink Triangle and have been the co-chair for the last four years, and of the OFL Solidarity and Pride Committee for the last six years.



What Pride means to me



Pride is a powerful force that combats hate, fear, and racism.

– Gary Sawatt Sprague (he/him)

Gary is a member of CUPE 2875 and works at Queensway Carleton Hospital in Ottawa.

Dave Butler (he/him)

David is a CUPE member; he lives in Chatham.

For me, Pride means being able to be comfortable in your own skin. No guilt, no shame and no apologies for living your best life as part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Not easy, I know, but it's what I envision in a perfect world.

Pride for me has also meant understanding that others in our community might be struggling with identity, family and/or other societal issues that can be difficult to deal with. I've dealt with a lot of these issues myself, as most of us have. Knowing that I might be able to help make things a bit easier for someone going through some of the same issues I experienced (and still do) is another part of what Pride is to me.



Pride over prejudice

On September 20, CUPE Ontario members stood up to hate and bigotry at the No Space for Hate Rally in support of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. It was one of dozens of counter-protests challenging efforts by far-right, conservative and anti-trans groups to stop teaching 2SLGBTQIA+ content in schools.

We were there to show that there was no place for hate in our schools and to demonstrate unequivocally that there is no place for hate within our society. We will continue to stand together, resolute in our commitment to combat lies and misinformation while championing love, care, and respect.



Inaugural Pink Triangle Award 2024

Keep your eyes open for the upcoming **CUPE Ontario Pink Triangle Award**.

The resolution that created the award was passed at CUPE Ontario's 2022 convention. The award recognizes work done by a local or a CUPE member in Ontario. (Pink Triangle committee members are not eligible).

Criteria for submissions will be released in 2024 when the other committees' awards are opened.



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Chair's corner

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

I first envisioned this piece on Trans Day of Remembrance 2022 at Queen's Park, when I hosted their trans flag raising. Yet I did not draft this until September 19 this year, when we were faced with Canada-wide protests that claimed that trans people were grooming young people to become trans. It's a ridiculous concept to which I respond here; I hope you like it:

Let's Talk about Grooming

As a child I was sent to Sunday School, where I grew restless, discontent and caused many a disturbance. When my mother informed me I did not have to go, I never went back. I was being groomed to become a Protestant. They did not teach me this religion started as a protest movement.

I still remember, when I was around eight years of age, I told my parents that I wanted to play house with the girls. They told me, no, boys don't do that. I was being groomed to stay a boy.

In high school, when we were discussing adolescent puberty, I shared in class that I shaved my legs. The teacher told me, "We don't talk about that." I was being groomed not to express myself or my feelings in public.

In tap dance class, I asked the teacher if I could wear tights like some others did. I was then taken out of dance class. I was being groomed to know that, if I expressed myself, I would lose things that were important to me.

By the time I was a teenager, I had learned that parental control was not my friend and would be used against me. I was being groomed not to trust adults.

So at seventeen years of age, I ran away from home and I never went back. I eventually ended up homeless on the streets of Toronto. I was being groomed for loneliness and an early death.

But eventually, I found community and acceptance, and I learned that these things are completely different from grooming. Thanks to our public services, I was able to get off the streets, access housing, and begin the long road to mental health recovery. I quickly found community supports, made new friendships, and enrolled in community college. I was learning to accept supports and began the process of coming out as my authentic self, living as a woman and changing my name to Susan.

Thank you to all social service, education, university, and health care workers for supporting me in my time of need. Because of you, I could learn to become who I am today. It's because of you that I am here today, writing this personal piece.

Let's keep doing this, together for others, to protect queer and trans kids. Instead of the kind of grooming I experienced, let's offer them community, acceptance and the freedom to be themselves.

At the North Bay Pride events in September, Susan received the first-ever Trans Advocate Award, which was named in her honour.

