

ONTARIO LIBRARY WORKERS COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2025

CUPE ONTARIO
**LIBRARY
WORKERS**

Celebrate Ontario Public Libraries Week

As library workers, we face a multitude of challenges: Disrespectful patrons, unruly kids, constant threats to services and budgets, medical crises and violence. Sometimes it feels like nobody cares.

But they do.

Every time we face a challenge, the public shows their love for libraries.

For Ontario Public Libraries Week, October 19-25, our campaign theme is “We Love Our Library Workers.” The idea is to get more people talking about and learning about the important role library workers play in providing the spaces and services they love.

By building awareness and raising library workers in people’s minds, we can build a strong community of supporters. When it comes time to fight for the budget increases needed to improve our lives and our libraries, this is a community we can mobilize.

More awareness of what we do and why it matters means that people will be more likely to engage with our

**WE
OUR
LIBRARY WORKERS**



campaigns, be they about municipal funding, health and safety, services or issues around equality and rights.

To order tote bags and stickers (using the logo above) for contests and giveaways are available for locals. To order, contact info@cupe.on.ca.

For more information about the campaign, visit cupe.on.ca/ontario-public-library-week.

Libraries Caucus 2025: Not just cardigans & kittens

The April 7 caucus featured a keynote presentation about the Peer Support Worker pilot at Hamilton Public Library. Mary Ellen Ruddell, director of peer support services at CMHA Hamilton explained the program together with Misty Thaler a peer support worker in the program, which

launched at HPL’s Central Library in January 2025. The four peer support workers meet face-to-face with people who are struggling with homelessness, drug use and mental health challenges, listening to and connecting them with community support services.

This was followed by Kendra Cowley, an adult librarian at Toronto Public Library and one of the organizers of Ontario Library Workers for Supervised Consumption Sites. Kendra spoke about the detriments of closing SCSs on libraries.

Learn more at <https://linktr.ee/libraryworkers4scs>

Both presentations generated a lot of discussion among the 17 locals at the Caucus and provided practical tools to help address the socio-economic

issues plaguing most library systems in Ontario.

Plan to attend the next Library Workers Caucus at the Delta Ottawa on April 7, 2026, at the beginning of the Ontario Municipal Workers Conference.



CMHA Director of Peer Support Services Mary Ellen Ruddell discusses new HPL program as peer support worker Misty Thaler looks on.



CUPE 4948 member Kendra Cowley introduces members to Ontario Library Workers for Supervised consumption Sites.

Local campaigns protect safe library services

To say that this has been a challenging year for library locals would be an understatement.

In early spring, both CUPE 1833 (Peterborough Public Library) and CUPE 65.15 (Fort Frances Public Library) faced layoffs because of municipal budget cuts.

Peterborough's management proposed a restructuring seemingly designed to push out three senior librarians, using a \$120,000 funding cut as an excuse. The local began an intensive campaign that asked, "What is a library without librarians?" Members leafleted at events with strong connections to library patrons, and the community rallied in support. Community supporters organized a rally, a petition that quickly surpassed 2000 signatures and an open letter to council signed by more than 100 artists including Neil Young and Margaret Atwood.

In the following media storm, the restructuring was cancelled, the CEO ceased being employed by the city and management engaged in more constructive discussions about the budget issue.

Fort Frances saw a similar situation with the library CEO planning to cut the children's librarian to part time and not hire students. CUPE 65.15's campaign similarly got media attention across northwestern Ontario and won a commitment to pause the proposed restructuring. The library's CEO resigned and the local was able to negotiate a first collective agreement.

Over the summer, CUPE 2067 (Windsor Public Library) began a campaign focused on building public support and



Peterborough residents rally in support of CUPE 1833 members outside Peterborough Public Library in May.

awareness about the library budget, which has not been increased for years. Starting with leafleting and a survey, the goal is to build a community to advocate during municipal budget discussions.

Following a violent attack on a library worker at Thunder Bay Public Library, CUPE 3120 began a public campaign to improve health and safety at the library. The system saw a 183 percent increase in incidents this winter. The issue is ongoing, but the library with the most incidents is temporarily closed as renovations take place.

On a happier note, CUPE 2318 (Essex County Library Board) has a new temporary building for members to work in following months of work to address formaldehyde contamination at one rural branch.

Council Watch

Public libraries are almost entirely dependent on municipal governments for funding. For that reason, it is critically important to monitor city council proceedings and show up - at least to listen - whenever the library or the budget is being discussed.

It is likewise important to get involved in the municipal elections. If we do not elect councils that believe in the value of public services like libraries, we will not be able to improve wages, working conditions or services.

You can find a municipal lobbying guide with lots of useful information at cupe.on.ca/sectors/municipal/

And don't forget to have someone sitting in on library board meetings, too!

Ontario Library Workers Caucus

Save The Date

April 7, 2026

(OMW April 7-11)

Delta Ottawa

Contact your library workers committee: librarychair@cupeomw.com

cj/cope491