

Newsletter

Winter 2025



CUPE Ontario
Pink Triangle
Committee

Comité du
triangle rose
du SFCP Ontario

Chair's corner

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

Wow, what a remarkable journey we travel in this political world of labour politics.

In September CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn informed me of the resignation of past PTC chair Vee Gandhi. This meant that I, as the runner-up in the election, was eligible to fill the vacancy. Surprised by this unexpected turn of events, I took a day to decide. As past chair, I understand the governance cycle and felt comfortable to assist in getting Pink Triangle to CUPE Ontario's convention in May 2026. So, I said yes.

This development followed an earlier one at the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), where I served as Solidarity and Pride committee alternate. In December 2024, the chair, Rob Boulet of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) told me he was stepping

down to take a job with his union. This meant I was now a vice-president at OFL, representing Solidarity and Pride.

Almost immediately I joined the OFL's "war room" for the provincial election in February. Following that, I worked with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) on the April federal election. For me, having been involved in party politics for decades, this was a bucket list achievement. Despite not being a head of a union, in equity matters, I am a tail wagging the dog to be more equitable.

No one is unaffected by events south of the border. On his first day in office, the US president implemented a transphobic executive order limiting sex identities to either male or female. Shortly after, he cut funding at United States Agency for International Development funding. This deeply and negatively impacted our work across borders at the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA). Did I mention that in January I was reappointed Trans Representative (North American/Caribbean) for another term as ILGA? This current United States administration outcomes are troubling and have caused international concern and outrage. The struggle continues.

So here we are, emerging from the excitement of CUPE National convention in October, post-OFL Convention in November, then plunging immediately into CUPE Ontario's Racial Justice and Human Rights Conference. The Pink Triangle Committee report will be presented at the Human Rights Conference. I feel grateful to have our Pink Triangle committee members contributing to this report and newsletter. We welcome our new national and campaign staff to support, assist and work collaboratively with us in this work. Finally, I am thinking about the success and challenges at the Ontario Executive and looking forward to reporting on those at Convention in May.

One never knows how things will turn out. This is today's lesson for life.



Nancy Hanschmann - still inspiring 2SLGBTQIA+ workers

Nancy Hanschmann was a long-time CUPE member and tireless activist for 2SLGBTQIA+ rights.

She was a leader in our union and she played a vital role on CUPE Ontario's Pink Triangle Committee and on CUPE National's Pink Triangle Committee, serving as the co-chair for four years.

Nancy was a member of CUPE 109 and she worked for the City of Kingston for more than 35 years. She was the first woman ever to be hired to the position of assistant supervisor position in the public works department - an achievement that she was proud of. Nancy was a member of the Pink Triangle Committee from 2008 until her passing.



She also made her mark for justice and the rights

of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals when she served on the Ontario Federation of Labour's Solidarity and Pride committee for more than six years. Nancy also served as OFL vice-president for part of her term as Solidarity and Pride representative.

Although we said goodbye to Nancy earlier this year, her influence is still felt in CUPE and beyond.

She was honoured at Kingston Pride in June. At CUPE Ontario's 2025 convention, Nancy and her many contributions were recognized with the Pink Triangle Award. And along with that other giant of labour, Leo Gerard, Nancy received a special mention at the Ontario Federation of Labour convention in November.



As members of the Pink Triangle Committee, we stood side by side with Nancy during countless campaigns and Pride celebrations. Nancy's message was simple: "be kind."

– CUPE Ontario
Pink Triangle
Committee



Celebrating Pride Across Ontario!

By Rhonda Grigsby (she/her), PTC member

Summer in Ontario means one thing – Pride season!

Pride celebrates visibility, courage, and the ongoing fight for equality. Every flag waved, every dance step, and every shared smile honours decades of activism and reminds us how far we've come – and how far we still need to go.

Ontario hosts one of the most diverse and extensive ranges of Pride events in Canada, from major urban festivals to smaller community gatherings. Whether you're in bustling Toronto or a lakeside town in Northern Ontario, you'll find welcoming spaces that honor queer voices and stories.

This past summer members of the Pink Triangle Committee participated in Pride celebrations in Hamilton, Cornwall, Lakefield, Kingston and Toronto, where we were also joined the Trans Rally and March and the Dyke Rally and March. CUPE members were out in force at each and every event. PTC chair Susan Gapka and committee member Joseph Di Flaviano attended Ottawa's Capital Pride, including the trans and dyke marches, with CUPE National Pink Triangle.





Promoting trans equity through bargaining

CUPE Ontario and the PTC marked Trans Awareness Month and Transgender Day of Remembrance by declaring our commitment to bargaining gender-affirming care in CUPE collective agreements.

Our union is a leader when comes to affirming and promoting trans rights. They are a matter of basic equity and have an important place in collective bargaining.

We're encouraging CUPE locals to follow the examples of CUPE locals 79, 4948 and 2998, all of which have successfully negotiated gender-affirming care for their members.

As trade unionists, we can ensure that trans people have the same access to supports, protections, and rights as every other member of our union.

You can read more about why this initiative is so important in our statement for Transgender Day of Remembrance at cupe.on.ca.

Transgender
Day of
Remembrance



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