

Wednesday, May 23, 2007

Windsor hosts: Economic policies are devastating working people

"Liberals and Conservatives are running neck-in-neck when it comes to crushing our dreams by privatizing healthcare," said John Grima, CUPE Windsor District Council President in his opening address to delegates.

Manufacturing jobs have been lost, our unemployment rate is 10%, and the City of Windsor has laid off workers, said Windsor and District Labour Council President Gary Parent. "Connect the dots. If you have less taxes being paid municipally, provincially and federally, then services are going to be eroded."

He urged delegates to join a mass rally this Sunday in Windsor to send a message to governments that the hemorrhaging of industries and services must be stopped.

Diversity and activism CUPE's strength- Génèreux

CUPE National is doing very well financially while building activism and strength, says Claude Génèreux, CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer.

"We are strong because we have such diversity in our union and because of the activism of CUPE's 565,000 members," said Génèreux. He recognized striking CUPE 218 school board workers. "They fought for themselves and for all Ontario school board workers to change a flawed education funding formula."

Génèreux acknowledged that the majority of large CUPE locals are in Ontario and that they contribute substantive income to CUPE National that benefits all CUPE locals. He also recognized that Ontario deserves more national staff representatives and that the national union is prepared to address that over time.

Strong financial infrastructure supports political campaigns

Building CUPE Ontario's infrastructure was the focus of Fred Hahn's first year as secretary-treasurer.

"We went back to basics and made sure the foundation of CUPE Ontario was strengthened for the future," said Hahn. Initiatives have included: changing from cash-based accounting to an accrual system, so income and expenses are clear; and needed investment in technology.

"Strong finances and strong systems are integral to the political work of CUPE," he added. "We used to think we could separate bargaining and political campaigns, but they are related. Without effective campaigns, we can't be effective at the bargaining table."



Women helped build labour movement

Fighting to build a future for our families is the history of women in the labour movement, Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) secretary-treasurer Irene Harris told convention delegates.

Women have banded together to make huge advances for all workers she said, including the post World War II effort to push Ontario to fund public child care, and the strike in 1907 by 400 Bell operators leading to workers' compensation legislation. Harris encouraged delegates to view a new OFL special art project on display in the convention gallery that celebrates and chronicles the achievements of union women.

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