

# OSBCC Conference Report

**"Nothing can stop us now!"**

## Words from the Chair

On behalf of the Ontario School Board Coordinating Committee, I would like to extend our thanks to everyone who attended this year's OSBCC conference in Niagara Falls. I hope you found it a rewarding and informative few days.

The 2014 conference took place from February 4 to 8, right in the midst of a hard-fought by-election for the provincial riding of Niagara. As 360 school support workers gathered to reflect, learn, debate and regroup after a tumultuous year, the campaign fever was a reminder of the vital importance of elections to us as trade unionists, public sector workers and CUPE members.

As education workers, we don't have to look any farther than Bill 115 – and its chaotic aftermath – to know that politics matter. They matter to the services we provide, to the young people whose success and achievements depend on our work, and to the justice and fairness that we demand as workers.

As I write, we anticipate a spring election in Ontario and we look ahead to municipal elections in the fall. Throughout the conference, we were urged again and again by our speakers to get involved in our local election campaigns. I'd particularly encourage OSBCC members to work to elect local school board trustees who value the work we do and the services we provide to students.



## Opening Plenary

Sister Terri Preston welcomed delegates to the 2014 conference, opening her remarks with a look back at Bill 115. She noted the efforts that the OSBCC was making on behalf of those members still facing penalties over their sick pay, vowing to continue fighting on behalf of those locals. She challenged members to prepare for the fight against contracting out in schools and encouraged them to promote their own expertise as a way of running schools more efficiently. "Let's pledge to take our place in our schools," she urged. "We want to progress, not just hold the line. Working in solidarity, nothing and no one can stop us."

Brother Fred Hahn, President of CUPE Ontario spoke next, describing the climate in the run up to the bargaining year and outlined the issues that CUPE members must resist, such as two-tier agreements – "a poison to our movement and a challenge to our ability to stand together."

Hahn went on to praise school board workers for the record numbers in which they lead Stand Up for Fairness, both in numbers trained and cards returned and urged leaders to use SUFF around upcoming contract negotiations, explaining, "Bargaining is our chance to build our relationship with members." He emphasized the importance of school board trustee elections and the chance to support and elect trustees who understand the



importance of our work in our schools, warning, “Hudak has promised to eliminate 10,000 support staff jobs from schools and eliminate the full-day kindergarten program.”

Delegates then watched a video address from Paul Moist, president of CUPE. Brother Moist expressed his pride at the work of the school board sector in tackling fairness and justice in education.



Brother Moist's video was followed by Sister Heather Skolly's introduction of Peggy Sattler, MPP for London West. Sattler paid tribute to all the CUPE members who worked to elect her in 2013's by-election and expressed



her appreciation of the support she has received from CUPE. As a former school trustee, she reminded

delegates, “Who you elect to the school board matters – to you, your workplace and your community.” She also disclosed the NDP's reservations around Bill 122 and vowed to fight for “more caring adults in our schools.”

## Wednesday: politics and proposals

On Wednesday morning, election fever raised the temperature in the conference hall. Unifor local president and Niagara by-election candidate [now MPP] for the NDP, Wayne Gates shared details of his family members' connections to the education system in Ontario.

He reminded delegates of PC leader Tim Hudak's promise to eliminate 10,000 jobs in the education sector – “not teachers, but school board staff members” – and reminded CUPE members that school support workers are “mentors for our children; they keep children safe and help them learn.”

### Bill 122

A brief update was provided on Bill 122, the proposed law which, if passed, would set out rules around future central bargaining. By designating the Trustee Associations as employer bargaining agents, the law would create a legal framework for Trustee Associations to act on behalf of their school boards. The proposed legislation would also set out a role for government at the table as well as a method of determining what issues would be discussed at a central table. CUPE has met with Teacher Federations to look at the problems with the proposed legislation and what amendments are necessary.

### Bargaining proposals

On Wednesday morning, declaring “We will not go backward,” Sister Preston introduced the elected bargaining committee and outlined the proposals for central bargaining or highly coordinated bargaining strategy:

- no concessions;
- wages and benefits;
- employment security: no layoffs, issues of replacement staff & workload, contracting out;
- scope of work;
- professional development;
- health and safety;
- employment equity;
- protection against CETA, the proposed free trade agreement between Canada and the Europe Union;
- funds for local bargaining;



- attendance management programs;
- establishing clear language for MOUs;
- casual workers.



### Stand Up for Fairness

On Wednesday morning, Sister Darcie McEathron began her presentation on the Stand Up for Fairness project by sharing a pro-union video on YouTube, *Just Another Cog in the Machine* (<http://bit.ly/1iVuH5R>). She reminded delegates that the campaign is about more than signing SUFF cards. Fred Hahn reminded delegates that Stand Up for Fairness is “not extra work; it’s the way our unions were formed.” Sister Elena Dinardo gave an example of her local partnering with another to show Sunday screenings of *We Are Wisconsin* and had approximately 500 members take the SUFF pledge.



### My Food, My Way

Sister Anna Hutchison and Brother John Weatherup of Local 4400 are involved in a campaign to increase student awareness in good nutrition, while at the same time developing practical skills which could lead to employment. The “My Food, My Way” campaign involves strategies which bring together students, public health officials, community colleges and the school board to talk about what students want in their cafeterias. The program also links student cooks to local restaurateurs to create employment opportunities. Offshoots of the program include urban farming initiatives where students grow some of the food which is later eaten in the cafeteria. Provincial funds are available to those interested in promoting healthy eating in schools and the promotion of teaching kitchens as a way to involve students directly in what they eat.

### My School Community Activity Book

Locals were encouraged to use the activity books which were developed to raise the profile of our work in schools. The books are aimed at elementary school children and their parents. The Layar application, a key feature of the activity books, was demonstrated. Once downloaded, the app brings special features of the activity book to life, highlighting and profiling the work of the featured jobs.

### Anti-Violence Lobby Kit

Sister Liz Harrison gave a presentation on the committee’s anti-violence lobby kit, asking members to use it to speak to trustees and MPPs to combat instances of violence in schools. “I’m looking forward to the conference at which violence is *not* an issue,” she declared.

### Health and Safety

Standing in for Brother Blain Morin, Coordinator Jim Morrison described the dangers to H&S committees that come with reductions in staff, which in turn restricts the efforts of workers to inspect workplaces and leads to joint committees working without CUPE representation. Long-serving H&S rep Don Postar gave his conference report, thanking the leaders of CUPE Ontario and wondering aloud when he might be permitted to “pass the torch.”

### Injured workers

Brother Darrell Day thanked all who have helped injured workers in their locals. He reported that CUPE had gone from a 70% success rate with hundreds of thousands of dollars awarded to injured workers to a 30% success rate due to new WSIB requirements.

## WSIB

Delegates were at once fascinated and appalled at the presentation from Brother Dave Chezzi on the current state of WSIB. He guided workers through the challenges of claiming for injuries through WSIB, urging them to fill in their workplace injury forms, adding “If in doubt, fill it out.... You are not expected to go home broken if you came to work perfectly fine.” He also outlined the policy changes that are making it harder to access benefits, saying the WSIB’s current objective to achieve savings, even as injuries are on the rise. He called on members to write to WSIB chair Elizabeth Witmer, demanding universal WSIB coverage and a public consultation on planned changes, and to support the coming CUPE campaign for universal WSIB coverage.



## Classification meetings

Thursday morning, workers gathered for classification meetings, giving school board workers from the same classifications the opportunity to discuss common issues they face at work.

## Workshops

In the afternoon, members took time to develop their skills in a variety of areas, including political action and lobbying; bargaining support and communicator training; public speaking; social media, board finances; benefits; OMERS; and Bargaining 101. Many thanks to CUPE National Staff who facilitated many of the sessions.

## Coordinator’s report

Brother Jim Morrison outlined the challenges for 2014, including full compliance by all school boards with the agreed MOUs; the work of the Technical Working Group

on Benefits; Bill 122, consultation and amendments; and a court challenge in June 2014 around Bill 115.

## Video preview

During his year-long sabbatical, National Researcher Paul O'Donnell researched and produced a 42-minute documentary, made up of interviews with CUPE school support workers who perform a variety of jobs in various Ontario school boards. Conference delegates were treated to a sneak preview of this lyrical and gentle video, with CUPE member Kathy Goulet, who is featured in the documentary, and Paul O'Donnell himself in attendance.



## Rally for respect

Following area meetings on Friday morning, conference delegates rallied in St. Catharines during the noon hour in support of CUPE members who work for the District School Board of Niagara. The rally, organized by Local 4156, was held at the board’s Education Centre in protest of the refusal of the board to implement the MOU and extend the same sick leave policy to all board employees.



## Conference business

### Final business

On Friday afternoon delegates met to report on the outcome of their classification meetings, adopt bargaining proposals, motions from delegates and by-law amendments. Below you will find a list of the motions which passed:

## MOTIONS

### INSTRUCTORS

#### **Motion #1 – Canada Job Grant**

Whereas, it is the consensus of the Instructor delegates to the OSBCC that current federal grants to the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU) must not be changed.

Therefore, be it resolved that CUPE Ontario lobby both the federal and provincial governments to ensure no changes are brought forth; that, should the Canada Job Grant be implemented, all programs who currently receive funding including, but not limited to Literacy and Basic Skills and Enhanced Language training, continue.

#### **Motion #2 – Placement of Students from English Speaking Countries into ESL/LINC Offices**

Whereas, it is the consensus of the Instructor delegates to the OSBCC that current immigration procedures, with specific reference to placement of adults seeking Canadian citizenship in LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers) be amended.

Therefore, be it resolved that CUPE Ontario lobby the government to ensure that the current practice of requiring individuals from countries where English is an official language who are applying for Canadian citizenship to have a Canadian Language Benchmark Level 4 cease and desist.

#### **Motion #3 – Job Security (Security of Funding)**

Referred to bargaining committee

#### **Motion #4 – PD Funding**

Referred to bargaining committee

#### **Motion #5 – PD Planning**

Referred to bargaining committee

### EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS

#### **Motion #2**

For the OSBCC Bargaining Committee to provide the OSBCC Educational Assistant Survey Package to the Minister of Education and other member association at a Provincial Discussion Table or when engaged in Coordinated Bargaining, in order to create awareness of ongoing violence against EAs and Support Staff Workers within the Province of Ontario. Further, the Bargaining committee will request a meeting with the Minister of Education and Ministry of Labour in order to review the reporting policies and procedures in School Boards in Ontario in order to create common language.

#### **Motion #3**

THAT the OSBCC Bargaining Committee negotiate under the workload language that due to the high incidence of violence in the workplace, that replacement coverage for absent EAs be made available as a priority funding to Boards.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

#### **Motion #2 – Class size**

That a standard cap of no more than 30 students is established in all Full Day Kindergarten Classes across Ontario.

#### **Motion #3 – Itinerant/Resource ECE's**

That the Ministry of Education fund the role of CUPE ECE's as Itinerant/Resource Early Childhood Educators to work with family of schools to implement, support, facilitate and assist in the delivery of the Full Day Kindergarten Program in all school boards.

#### **Motion #4 – College Certification Reimbursement**

That all school boards will reimburse Early Childhood Educators for the cost of annual membership in the College of Early Childhood Educators.

#### **Motion #5 – Legal Rep at College of ECE**

That CUPE provide ECE's legal representation at the College of ECE's.



**LIBRARY WORKERS****Motion #1**

That the OSBCC through CUPE Ontario, organize and run a public awareness campaign to raise the profile of school libraries and bring attention to the role and value of Library Workers in the publicly-funded school systems.

**OFFICE/CLERICAL****Motion #2**

The implementation of the safe welcoming schools program that was mandated by the ministry be revisited by the OSBCC with a demand for additional funding for additional staff at all school board sites.

**Motion #3**

That no student or any volunteers be allowed to do the work of the bargaining unit, with or without supervision.

**Motion #4**

That money be allocated for Professional Development for office/clerical workers (individual courses to be included).

**CUSTODIAL/CARETAKING****Motion #1**

Recommend that the OSBCC move on the following point on behalf of Caretaker/Custodial Occupation group during any provincial Bargaining:

- Classifications be standardized and looked at across the province of Ontario
- That the OSBCC move toward harmonization of School standards, wages (without red circling), benefits, workload without the loss of jobs province wide for all members
- That the OSBCC negotiate with the province that all square footage inside and out whether instructional footage or not be included into the formula
- Job descriptions be standardized across the province
- Standardized release time across the province to attend Leadership meetings, Conferences, and jurisdictional meetings
- That we move to standardized language for promotions: seniority shall be the determining factor”
- That we Continue talks with all Political parties for future PDT agreements
- That we add Contracting in Language

- Efforts should be made to improve the funding formula to cover English and French boards including:

1. A staffing formula to include but not be limited to a combination of pupil enrolment and square footage formula which will be acceptable to all locals in Ontario also a formula to include outside work.
2. That the committee formulate language requiring 100% replacement starting from day one (1) for all absences including but not limited to sick leave, vacation, WSIB, Union Leaves, etc.
3. Also negotiate a CUPE custodian for every school to be included in the school foundation grant.
4. That the PDT negotiate the sealing of the envelope for school operations with the ability to move money into envelope.

**Motion #2 – Contracting In/Out**

Referred to bargaining committee

**Motion #3**

Lead hand or Head Custodian or Day Shift Custodian should not be included in the square footage calculation.

**Motion #4**

That the provincial government agree to set up a committee to look at introducing additional daytime positions to deal with issues such as but not limited to water flushing testing, recycling, composting, special cleaning and other Eco related issues.

**Motion #5 – Split shifts**

Referred to bargaining committee

**Motion #6 – CETA**

Referred to bargaining committee

**Motion #7**

Implement the recommendations from the school operations working group except the attendance management recommendations.

**MAINTENANCE & TRADES****Motion #2 – Contracting In/Out**

Referred to coordinated bargaining committee

### **Motion #3 – Maintenance & Trades Certificate Fees (Coordinated Bargaining)**

All Maintenance and Trades who require a Certificate to perform their duties will have all Fees paid by the Employer.

### **Motion #4 – Apprenticeship Funds** referred to coordinated bargaining.

## **IT MOTIONS**

### **Motion #2 – Staffing Formula**

- The OSBCC will use their researcher to investigate and produce industry standard staffing models, to aid in the creation of a standard staffing model for IT
- Conduct a survey of Locals to determine Existing Models, and how the researched models may impact the local's current staffing levels.
- Secure funding for staffing enhancements through central bargaining.

### **Motion #3 – Contracting Out/In**

The OSBCC will:

- develop resources/tools/speaking notes to assist locals in having contracting in/out conversations with Boards;
- develop tools to help locals make a business case for keeping work in-house.

### **Motion #4 – Use of personal vehicles**

The OSBCC will:

- research the industry standards & what works, and develop coordinated language for locals;
- Secure funding to enhance local language, which will allow locals to negotiate better working conditions, which address the concerns of members regarding Personal Use of Vehicles;
- have their researcher look into the implications of members using their personal vehicle for business & courier use (such as Tax Implications, Insurance Costs and Repercussions).

### **Motion from Area 5 & 6**

As members of Area 5 & 6, we move that OSBCC adopt one coordinated campaign with one slogan to be made available to all locals for the upcoming bargaining.

### **Motion from Area 13**

That OSBCC assist and fund a Media fight back Campaign for Locals of the non-compliant boards.

### **Motion from Health & Safety/Injured Worker workshop**

That OSBCC assist the Locals involved in the fight back against the threat to our multi-site Joint Health & Safety committees, including but not limited to financial support. We also request that this issue be brought forward to central/coordinated bargaining

### **OSBCC Motion #9**

The Employer will recognize full day kindergarten and compensate the custodial/caretaker allotment for each site affected.

### **New Motion**

THAT the OSBCC be directed to approach the National / Ontario Division for funding to ensure that no local is left behind by Boards failing to follow the negotiated MOU and further that the political arm of CUPE “the Ontario Division” do everything within their power to force the government to ensure that all Boards become in compliance with this negotiated agreement by any means necessary.



## WINNERS

The OSBCC held daily 50/50 draws throughout the week to raise funds for a local charity, the Red Roof Retreat, which provides respite and recreational programs for children, youth and young adults with special needs, and their families in the Niagara area. The charity director, Merv Ott, was presented with a cheque for \$2107 and he thanked all delegates for their generosity.



### 50/50 winners

First draw (Tuesday)  
\$655 was won by Susy Viana-Azevedo Local 5200

Last draw (Saturday)  
\$862 was won by Diane Carder Local 218

### Daily draw winners

Tuesday  
\$100 was won by Bill Hanna Local 4400

Wednesday  
\$100 was won by Pam Gray Local 2357

Thursday  
\$100 was won by Jenn Eckert Local 7575

Friday  
\$100 was won by Louise Sabourin Local 4155

Saturday  
\$200 was won by Eddie Pereira Local 2544



## LAST WORDS

### Closing plenary

CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Candace Rennick congratulated the committee on the highest attendance to date for an OSBCC conference. Sister Rennick then gave a presentation on Bill C-377, the Harper government's highly partisan anti-union bill that attacks Canadians' right to freedom of association and free speech. "This will affect us all," she warned. "We have to show them we are not going to take it." CUPE Ontario plans to share its presentation with Local presidents across the province.

### Brigitte DePape

When former Parliamentary page Brigitte DePape made her legendary protest on the floor of the House of Commons, the labour movement won a passionate and articulate champion. She thanked CUPE members for all the work they are doing and gave an overview of what she and fellow activists are doing to mobilize one million young people to become involved in politics.

In a show of solidarity, delegates took up a collection totalling \$1635, with a recommendation that it be matched by CUPE Ontario. The funds were for a planned "food blockade" at the offices of Conservative politicians. The action is designed to show that, whatever Harper says at budget time, the Conservative government is bad for the economy and food bank use is at an all-time high.



## WHO IS REPRESENTING YOU?

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