

# **CUPE 1281 NEWS LETTER**

NOVEMBER 2016



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# Member Education, Political Action and New Organising

Orion Keresztesi (President)

It is November and the new executive team has settled into our roles and got to work. In August we met to chart our priorities for the coming year based on the discussions at convention. I am particularly excited about our plans for member education and political action.

Tamara, Evan, and Gily are spearheading our new education efforts. Working with staff they are developing new trainings and discussions for stewards so all stewards can feel confident in their role. Stewards' Council on November 28 will kick off the new trainings, and we are all hoping for a strong turn-out of stewards. We are also working to be more proactive about encouraging members to take advantage of funding available for them to attend CUPE workshops. We are glad to report that we received more interest in educationals than in past years and we have been able to disburse the entirety of the funding that was earmarked for CUPE's Fall School.

In the political action department we hope to continue 1281's tradition of being a voice for equity in the labour movement, and to help mobilize for the \$15 and Fairness campaign. We had a strong showing at the October 1 Rally for Decent Work. As Evan discusses in more detail, the \$15 and Fairness campaign is continuing to be very effective at mobilizing workers and winning indirect and direct political victories. As

1281 members when we rally behind the campaign and participate in it we are contributing to building a militant labour movement that fights on behalf of all working people. Trump's victory in the U.S. underscores that people are fed up with the neoliberal status quo everywhere. We know on the ground organizing will be key to us building a left-wing articulation of that anger and depriving the racist far-right of their populist talking points.

The widespread horror at Trump's victory presents an important opportunity to pull new activists into the indigenous solidarity, migrant rights, climate justice, \$15 and Fairness and Black Lives Matter movements. There are many 1281 members deeply involved in the work of each of those struggles and I hope as a union we will continue to find ways to support them.



Sadly, 1281 must continue our moratorium on new organizing. Workplaces continue to reach out to 1281 in the hopes of joining. However, as an executive, we feel we are not currently in a position to offer new members the servicing they would need and deserve. We are working with the Organizing Committee to ensure that the moratorium will be temporary. When we lift the moratorium we need to organize according to a strategic plan that will allow us to increase our resources to match our servicing needs. If you know of a workplace that may be interested in joining 1281 please contact me. We are committed to new organizing, because all workers deserve a union, and the lucky ones deserve 1281!



# Vice-President's Report

Tamara Williams (Vice-President)

This November 28, 2016 your Union invites all Stewards to refresh their stewarding skills at this year's Stewards Council Meeting.

According to our Bylaws, the duties of Sub-unit Stewards are as follows:

- Ensure that the Collective Agreement is adhered to
- Ensure that meetings are called and proper notice given
- Ensure minutes are kept, approved, and forwarded to the Recording Secretary if requested
- Workplace representative for the bargaining committee
- Represent all members of the sub-unit fairly

These are serious responsibilities so if you've ever felt skeptical or unsure of your role in a grievance, at Labour Management Meetings,



at a discipline, in bargaining, or caught in between the conflict of two members, come to Stewards Council. This will be a hands-on, interactive session to equip you to do the duties above, so jot down your questions and bring your Collective Agreement because we're going to hone your skills!

This session runs from 10-6pm. Quorum for the transaction of business at Council is twenty-five (25%) percent of elected stewards, from sub-units in good standing as of twenty (20) calendar days prior to the Stewards' Council meeting. Let's surpass 25% and get 100% of Stewards collaborating, sharing experiences, and learning the same thing at the same time for consistency.

See you in at the OPSEU Toronto Regional Office and Membership Centre at 10am on Monday, November 28, 2016. As always, a tasty lunch with sweet treats will be provided.

## have a solidarity request?

Are you looking for support for an event or initiative? Is there an issues you think CUPE 1281 should put its' name behind? Would you like to see an event or cause featured in our newsletter? CUPE 1281 can offer support and solidarity to community lead social justice initiatives. Send your solidarity requests to [equity@cupe1281.ca](mailto:equity@cupe1281.ca) so that it may be placed on the next CUPE 1281 Executive agenda!

This month we have offered support and solidarity for the following initiatives and organizations:

- CUPE 2974 – Library Workers Striking in Essex County
- OPIRG Toronto's Disorientation Week
- Hassan Diab Support Committee's Film Screening and Public Meeting
- The Women's Coordinating Committee for a Free Wallampu's Black Bird Liberation Film Series in Commemoration of the 43rd Anniversary of Coup d'état in Chile
- Canadian Federation of Students Nov 2 National Day of Action for Free Education
- Black Live Matter
- War Resisters
- Justice for Abdirahman Coalition
- How to be an Ally: Islamophobia at the Intersections

# Making every vote count - why proportional representation is better for Canada

Brynne Sinclair-Waters (Recording Secretary)

Following up on the Liberals' 2015 election promise, the federal government is reviewing our voting system. The [Special Committee on electoral reform](#) – appointed to study alternate voting systems, mandatory voting and online voting – has travelled the country to hear from Canadians.

On September 21, I presented at the committee's stop in Toronto. In addition to hearing from expert witnesses, they had also allotted time to hear from members of the public. I chose to focus on the need for a proportional system, echoing [CUPE's position that Mixed Member Proportional Representation is the best option](#).

Growing inequality is feeding disaffection with both our economic and political system. I believe that democracy must act as a counter against these trends, but today's electoral system is not serving us well in this regard.

In my experience, many people who care deeply about growing inequality and are actively involved in making the economy

more fair – for example, by advocating for a \$15 minimum wage – even these politically engaged people, often do not feel that engaging in electoral politics is worthwhile. That's a problem.

A proportional system can help overcome this lack of engagement, and support building a fair society where political and economic power is less concentrated.

[Research shows](#) that countries with proportional systems have considerably lower levels of inequality, and that when systems become more proportional, inequality actually decreases. This is because when the system is more representative, more people participate, and the government becomes responsive to the demands of a wider range of voters.

Guided by values of fairness and equality, I encouraged the Committee to recommend Mixed Member Proportional representation, which could significantly improve engagement and representation, while also providing elected representatives with a personal connection to their ridings.



## CUPE 1281 IS GETTING SOCIAL!

Are you working on a project in your community that you think 1281 should be helping promote? With our community calendar in our website, our multiple social media pages, and semesterly newsletter, we can help you do that!

Please contact your Communications Officer ([communications@cupe1281.ca](mailto:communications@cupe1281.ca)) with events that you are taking part in in your community.

Please try to routinely check out the calendar and let us know if there's something missing. Also, please check the steward section and let us know if there is any information that should be updated.

## Shop Stewards

**Arts & Science Students' Union  
(ASSU)**  
Jane Seto

**Association of Part-time  
Undergraduate Students (APUS)**  
Shevan Bastian

**Canadian Federation of Student  
- Ontario (CFS-O)**  
Alastair Woods

**Canadian Federation of Students  
(CFS)**  
Laura Rashotte

**Carleton University Graduate  
Students' Association (GSA)**  
- position vacant -

**Centre for Women & Trans  
People at U of T**  
Sabera Esufali

**Centre for Women and  
Trans People, York University**  
karen krauter

**CFRU**  
Christopher Currie

**CKCU**  
Dylan Hunter

**Continuing Education Students'  
Association of Ryerson (CESAR)**  
Alyssa Williams

**CUPE 3900s**  
Sheila Wilmot

**Federation of Metro Tenants'  
Associations (FMATA)**  
Wendy Lum

**GSAED**  
Lucie Morin

**Guelph Resource Centre for  
Gender Empowerment &  
Diversity (GRCGED)**  
Lori Guest

**Karma Cooperative Grocery**  
Kathryn Camfield

**Koskie Minsky LLP**  
-position vacant-

**Mayworks**  
-position vacant-

-list continues on the next page-

# Keep Fighting for \$15 and Fairness

Evan Johnson (Co-Chief Steward)

Since its launch in spring 2015, the Fight for \$15 and Fairness has been building a broad and vibrant campaign that unites union and non-union workers together in a common struggle. It's a struggle that seeks to improve working conditions for all, regardless of what industry you work in, and regardless of whether you work part-time, full-time, or on contract.



The opening for this campaign came when the Ontario government announced that they were reviewing two key pieces of legislation — the Employment Standards Act (ESA) and the Ontario Labour Relations Act (OLRA) — under the banner of the Changing Workplaces Review. Two advisors were appointed and tasked with touring the province for a series of public consultations.

Since then, hundreds of volunteers have been collecting signatures on petitions, meeting with their MPPs, building chapters in their communities, and equipping a new generation of activists with the tools they need to bring people together and organize for change.

On October 1st, thousands descended on Queen's Park for the "Rally for Decent Work," organized by the Workers' Action Centre and the Ontario Federation of Labour. CUPE 1281 executive members joined with other labour and student unions, community and faith organizations, to show the extent of the support for \$15 and Fairness' campaign demands.

*As we approach 2017, the campaign is entering a pivotal moment.*

Back in July, the Ontario government's special advisors released their long-anticipated Changing Workplace Review Interim Report, which summarizes the findings from their public consultations. The report offers some commentary on the current state of work, and summarizes what they heard from the over 200 submissions that were made by workers and

labour activists from across Ontario.

The next step will be for the special advisors to release a final report, which will contain a set of concrete recommendations to the Ontario government. However, the substance of their recommendations have yet to be determined, and it's important that we keep the pressure up to ensure that the recommendations reflect the interest of workers rather than big business.

That's why we must continue to build momentum. We need to demonstrate the strength of our movement, and make it clear to the Premier and her advisors that not only does the public stand behind our campaign's demands, but that union and non-union workers will not be divided by any scraps that may be thrown from the government's table.

CUPE 1281 has been a strong supporter of the campaign since the beginning. At our October 2015 Steward's Council meeting, we passed a motion re-affirming our support and involvement in the \$15 and Fairness Campaign.

And as members of CUPE 1281, we have a key role to play. By virtue of our workplaces, many of us have one foot in our union and one foot in a variety of other social justice communities. This puts us in the unique position of being able to bridge the importance of union-specific issues to non-union members, and non-union issues to union members.

The big rally has come and gone and now we are ready to keep petitioning, building support for the campaign in our communities and campuses, and acting in solidarity with those workers who are taking up the campaign in their bargaining demands and walking the picket lines for \$15 an hour. The least workers deserve is fairness, and this campaign can be the seed for a revitalized workers' movement that can begin to push for much more.

## Shop Stewards (continued)

Niell-Wycik  
William Wagner

**Ontario Confederation of  
University Faculty Associations**  
Cheryl Athersych

**Ontario Public Interest Research  
Group (OPIRG)**  
Nailla Lalji

**Raven, Cameron, Ballantyne &  
Yazbeck LLP**  
-position vacant-

**Ryerson Students' Union, Unit 1**  
Jenn Kuo

**United Steel Workers Local 1998  
(USW 1998)**  
Kimberley Walker

**University of Ontario Institute of  
Technology Faculty Association  
(UOITFA)**  
Denise Martins

**University of Toronto Faculty  
Association**  
Chris Penn

**University of Toronto Students'  
Union (UTSU)**  
Vita Carlino

**University of Windsor Graduate  
Student Society (UWSSS)**  
Stephanie Wood

**Ursel Phillips Fellows Hopkinson**  
- position vacant -

**The Workers Arts & Heritage  
Centre**  
Tara Bursey

**Wilfrid Laurier  
University Faculty Association  
(WLUFA)**  
Sheila Mckeeptopapas

**York Federation of Students  
(YFS)**  
Aaron Haddish

**York University Faculty  
Association (YUFA)**  
Sonja Killoran-McKibbin

**York University Graduate  
Students' Association (YUGSA)**  
Evan Johnston

**York University Staff Association  
(YUSA)**  
Filomena Weatherill

## Update from the 519 area code

Christopher Currie (Co-Chief Steward)



On September 5, while other execs were slowly marching through the Toronto Labour Day parade route, I was overseeing a table for the Guelph & District Labour Council (GDLC)'s Labour Day picnic. The vibe of this event, as in past years, was an odd mix of community gathering and activist fair: folk singers and children's games existed side-by-side with \$15 and Fairness and the decolonial beats of Darius Mirshahi.

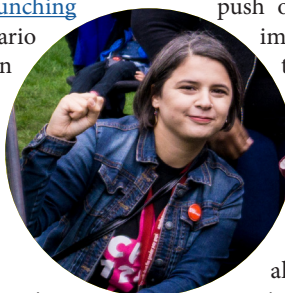
It was duly noted at the picnic by GDLC President Janice Folk-Dawson that the Labour Day holiday recognized by the state in September is really a cheap corporate substitute – we should be celebrating the labour movement's triumphs on International Workers' Day, May 1. But that's a discussion for another time ...

The GDLC contingent also had a visible presence at the October 1 Rally for Decent Work at Queen's Park, where our drums and costumes attracted some notice. And the labour council has been active in the fight against Nestle's efforts to extract more water from nearby Aberfoyle. (On a related point, I would encourage all 1281 delegates to call out, with as much diplomacy as befits the occasion, any labour meeting or conference that carries bottled water, particularly if it's from the Nestle brand. This is not, I regret to say, a purely hypothetical request.)

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the recent passing of Enza Commisso, a longtime CUPE 973 president with whom I briefly served in the GDLC executive. Her presence will be missed.

## How we can #KeepHydroPublic

Denise Martins (Communications Officer)



On September 14th 2016, CUPE Ontario announced that they'll be [launching a lawsuit](#) against the Ontario Government (Premier Kathleen Wynne, Finance Minister Charles Sousa and former Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli) for malfeasance for their move to privatize our hydro systems without consent from the public.

CUPE Ontario's move to fight in courtrooms is a good one and we should support these types of actions where possible. However, we must also ask questions when we don't see the campaign reflected in our neighbourhoods.

We need to remind our leaders that fighting against privatization is about more than preparing for elections in target ridings. We need to continue to push for progressive campaigns that fight against privatization and remind our labour leaders that this is more than about ridings, elections, and getting e-mail lists. This is about mobilizing all Ontarians against a capitalist agenda that seeks to reap profits from our pockets.

We need to constantly remind ourselves that

while there are election issues that we should push on come election time, it is just as important to make demands clear through mobilization and action on the streets.

Some might say this is a question of resources but as this is the largest privatization in the history of the province, we should also be calling on all labour leaders and other community activists to take on this issue.

CUPE Ontario's determined support for the campaign is important because despite the fact that there are no CUPE jobs in Hydro One, there are CUPE homes impacted by Hydro One. It is important because it shows a union fighting on behalf of all of us.

Let's not forget that if Hydro One was so desperately failing us, the shareholders, then there wouldn't be a long list of banks waiting to grab every piece Wynne is willing to sell off.

If you think Hydro One is expensive now (and it is), wait until there is a monopoly being driven strictly by profit.



# A Case for Free Post-Secondary Education

Paige Gallette (Secretary-Treasurer)

Let's be clear: universal access to education is far from being a reality for students across Canada. Class sizes are on the rise, recent graduates struggle to work countless hours to pay down student debt, and even professors are pushed into increasingly precarious positions as part-time and contract work become the norm everywhere, including on university campuses. Meanwhile, university Presidents benefit the most, as some make 6 figure incomes while exacerbating the corporatization of campus, giving more space to banks and private companies than they do to average students, researchers and members of the academic community.



What has post-secondary education become? The fastest-growing population in Canada, the aboriginal community, still today face constant barriers in accessing post-secondary education. There is inadequate funding and support for Indigenous learners, as the 2% funding cap to the Post-Secondary Support System Program (PSSSP) remains in place. This cap has remained the same in the last 20 years, as Indigenous communities have continued to grow. Furthermore, Métis and Inuit and “non status” Indigenous peoples can't access their fair share of the minimal funding offered through the program. Where is the justice in that?

Black students on campus continue to fight for the right to learn about their own history, as shown by the scarcity of African studies

programs across Canada.

International students often have to pay over three times the tuition fees of a domestic student, while paying an even larger amount for private health coverage, since, in Ontario, they aren't eligible for public health (OHIP).

Les étudiant.e.s et étudiants francophone se voient privés d'accès à une éducation de langue française, même dans un pays qui se prétend bilingue. La sélection d'institutions pouvant accommoder le nombre d'étudiant.e.s francophone est minime, et il est souvent impossible de terminer son diplôme sans devoir s'inscrire dans des cours en anglais.

On November 2, students from across the country, demanded that their respective provinces work together to reduce barriers to post-secondary education and to once and for all create a country that provides education for everyone: a post-secondary education that is free.

This call to action demands for us, as members of the labour movement, to be militant and vigilant. CUPE 1281 supports the continuous efforts to achieve a post-secondary education that is accessible for everyone and encourages all its members to participate in rallies actions and working groups in their own communities. Now is the time to stand side by side with students in their fight for free education for all!

## Executive & Staff

**Orion Keresztesi**

President

president@cupe1281.ca

**Tamara Williams**

Vice-President

vicepresident@cupe1281.ca

**Paige Gallette**

Secretary-Treasurer

treasurer@cupe1281.ca

**Brynne Sinclair-Waters**

Recording Secretary

recordingsecretary@cupe1281.ca

**Gilary Massa**

Equity Officer

equity@cupe1281.ca

**Denise Martins**

Communications Officer

communications@cupe1281.ca

**Christopher Currie**

Co-Chief Steward

chiefsteward1@cupe1281.ca

**Evan Johnston**

Co-Chief Steward

chiefsteward2@cupe1281.ca

**Mary-Jo Nadeau**

Staff Representative

office@cupe1281.ca

**Sara Jaffri**

Administrative Coordinator/  
Assistant Staff Representative

admin@cupe1281.ca



## We want to hear from you, and promote your work!

This is your union. We want to hear what you are doing and how we can best showcase your great work. Please tag us in your tweets and facebook posts. Also, feel free to send photos for us to post on social media on your behalf. You can e-mail them to Denise at [communications@cupe1281.ca](mailto:communications@cupe1281.ca).

## Contribute to the Newsletter!

This is your newsletter, submit something!\* Whether it's an article, photos, drawing, etc. make sure to get it in by Friday December 9th, 2016. E-mail submissions to Denise at [communications@cupe1281.ca](mailto:communications@cupe1281.ca).

\*Please note that the CUPE 1281 executive reserves the right to select pieces for inclusion in the newsletter.