

Nominations Will Open for 7 Executive Positions at Our June General Membership Meeting

At our upcoming GMM on June 15th, nominations will be taking place for the following Executive Board positions:

Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, Chief Steward, Health & Safety Officer, FT/PT Representative, Casual Representative, and Faculty Club Representative.

If more than one candidate is nominated for any given position, elections for these positions will be held at the October General Membership Meeting. Members must be nominated in June in order to be on the ballot in October.

Section 8 of our bylaws allow nominations either in person at the meeting, or in advance if witnessed by another member who attends the meeting. You can see the full details of the nomination procedure at 3261.cupe.ca/resources/bylaws. Please feel free to contact the union if you have any questions.

We encourage any and all members who would like to get more involved with the Union to run for an executive board position!

GMM Details:

The General Membership Meeting will be held at the St. George campus on **Saturday, June 15th at the Sanford Fleming Building rm. 1101 from 10AM to 12PM**. As always, coffee and donuts are on us. Whether or not you are interesting in running for an executive board position we encourage everyone to come out to hear our regular meeting updates and talk about what's new with the local.



"Ford the Puppet." \$15 and Fairness and labor unions rally at Queen's Park following the passing of Bill 47 which rolled back labor reforms despite overwhelming public opposition.

Doug Ford: For the People?

By Stanley Treivus, CUPE 3261 Casual Representative

Shortly after Doug Ford and his Provincial Conservative government was elected last year, many people who felt disillusioned with the Liberal government took in what they thought was a breath of fresh air as a new government, self-proclaimed as one "For The People," took over the mantles of provincial power and set forth with an agenda to reform the province. But what would this reform look like? As election day neared, few policy proposals had been laid out. It was only a week before the election that Ford finally laid out a platform, albeit without a real fiscal plan. But that didn't matter — people wanted change, and change he was. After embarking on a plan to make Ontario "Open for Business," it didn't take long for Ontarians to see the real damage he had in mind.

In his quest to make Ontario into a lucrative shopping mall, Ford began to chip away at "red tape" which he argued was preventing business investments and costing us jobs. Naturally, he first targeted struggling and low-income workers. This involved scrapping Bill 148, the landmark labour legislation passed in 2017 that would have brought the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, while further guaranteeing equal pay for equal work. Had Ford not repealed Bill 148, many casual workers at U of T whom perform the same work as their full and part-time colleagues may have seen equal wages today. The

scrapping of Bill 148 also meant the loss of an already meagre two mandatory paid sick days. While working people suffered (and continue to suffer) from these changes, wealthy corporations, largely represented by the powerful Ontario Chamber of Commerce lobby — which UofT is a member of — heaved a sigh of relief as they didn't have to worry about disbursing any more of *their* profits to their most impoverished employees.

Ford's other big changes included scrapping the Cap and Trade system, which will cost the province \$450 million in revenue, and replacing it with less effective taxpayer funded methods, costing "the people" \$400 million. With Bill 66 Ford attempted to cut regulations that would protect clean water, prevent toxic dumping of industrial waste, and keep the Green Belt free of commercial and residential development. Only after immense pressure were these proposals withdrawn, but we are likely to see them again.

The list goes on: Ford cancelled planned increases for Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program, leaving the poorest Ontarians with dwindling financial support as inflation catches up; he cut funding for mental health; scrapped the sex-ed curriculum; legislated striking workers at York and OPG back to work; vindictively slashed Toronto City Council in half (which is actually projected to increase costs); cancelled a tax increase on the rich; rolled back rent control; ...

Continued on reverse.

“Doug Ford: For the People?” continued

...cut funding for the Ontario Arts Council; cut support for legal assistance; cut funding for Indigenous programs; cut public education spending by laying off teachers and increasing class sizes; cut \$500 million from OHIP services; cut revenue for cities — and so on and so forth.

Ford's government has been cutting left, right, and center. Their recent budget slices into every ministry while at the same time granting a generous \$3.8 billion in tax credits for corporations. Many of these changes will directly affect us as CUPE 3261 members. For example, Ford's 10% cut in post-secondary tuition fees, although at first seen as a laudable move, was quickly exposed as a sham: The cut is expected to be absorbed by existing school operating budgets, meanwhile students will in fact face higher costs as OSAP funding is being cut and grants are being replaced with loans (with a little extra interest to boot). The 10% tuition cut will put pressure on universities to find new revenue and slash student services — and this on top of other cuts totalling \$100 million per year in post-secondary operating grants! Meanwhile, a provision in the recently passed Bill 66 now permits public institutions including universities to contract out work, primarily in construction, to non-union workers. Previously, institutions like UofT were mandated by law to only hire unionized labour for construction projects. And if only to further kick us while we're down, it appears the Ford government is planning to introduce legislation that will mandate a cap on increases to public sector wages. This means many public sector workers, including CUPE members who make an average of only \$40,000 a year, may have no room to negotiate meaningful economic increases in the next round of bargaining.

Let's be clear — these changes are not borne out of necessity. The government has chosen to manufacture a debt crisis (most experts would agree our debt-to-GDP ratio is relatively healthy) while inflating the deficit in an attempt to justify these changes. Meanwhile, instead of seeking revenue that can be used to expand or maintain our public services while paying down the debt, Ford and his government has chosen to dismantle our public services, further threaten our environment, and reduce labour

protections. All this in exchange for a failed buck-a-beer challenge, alcohol in parks, investments in horse-racing, new license plates, higher speed limits, and billions in tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy.

This isn't to say Ford hasn't done anything good. The last budget did introduce some investments in childcare, as well as dental care for seniors. But outside these two areas, Ford has imposed a needless and painful austerity program on the province all to balance the budget one year sooner than the Liberal government expected to. The province of Ontario already boasts the lowest program spending per person in Canada. Far from being an issue of spending, what Ontario has is a revenue problem — one that Ford's policies will only exacerbate.

This means we have a difficult road ahead. Although Ford's moves may see the province pay off some of its debt, it cannot compare to the social cost Ford has and will continue to inflict “for the people.” Whether it's in cuts to healthcare, social services, education, or the environment, these policies affect everyone, and can only lead to a worsening quality of life for Ontarians — especially those already struggling with low wages, precarity, soaring housing costs, student debt, and insufficient social assistance. With Ford's attempt to trim red tape, find “efficiencies” and reduce the size of government, it's public sector workers like us that will be hit the hardest. Doug Ford has declared war on us, and it is up to us to resist these changes, this government, and the politics it represents.

\$15 and Fairness is one of many organizations actively resisting Ford's government. Visit 15andfairness.org to learn more. The Toronto and York Labour Council is also a great organization and resource found at labourcouncil.org. Of course, you can count on us to keep you up to date with all things CUPE.



“You're worth it”

Steward Stef Kennedy Speaks at Sector Conference

This past November, several CUPE 3261 members had the opportunity to attend the annual CUPE Sector Conference, hosted in Ottawa. The annual conference brings together thousands of workers across Canada to discuss and strategize about issues facing specific sectors within CUPE. During the conference, our very own member and shop steward Stef Kennedy participated in a panel as part of a larger discussion titled *Public Wins: Fighting Privatization*. Stef had the opportunity to share her story as a food service worker at Robarts and discussed the changes she experienced when the University of Toronto took over food services after ending their contract with the company Aramark.

The discussion featured several other panelists who shared their experience with fighting against contracting out and privatization, and the subsequent benefits that come when services are contracted in-house. For example, when UofT ended its contract with Aramark in 2016, over 250 employees were transferred over to the CUPE 3261 bargaining unit, with many receiving a wage increase as high as 60% — some going from only \$12 an hour to over \$20 while continuing to do similar work. Workers were also enrolled in benefits and pension plans, and given new perks such as tuition waivers for dependents, increased vacation time, and personal days.

During the panel, Stef was asked what message she would want to send to workers who are currently struggling against increasing privatization and precarious work: “You're worth it” she replied, before being met with a roaring applause, reminding us that every single person deserves work that is fair and dignified.

Quick Look: Bargaining

CUPE 3261's UofT Press concluded their bargaining in April 2019. Their one-year deal contains some minor benefit improvements along with a 3% economic increase. Our Faculty Club unit is set to begin bargaining in Fall 2019.

If you have any comments or suggestions regarding the Union newsletter, please feel free to contact David Vieira at dvieira.cupe3261@hotmail.com.