



CUPE ONTARIO YOUNG WORKERS CONFERENCE
2024

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Report on CUPE Ontario Young Workers Conference 2024

Event Details:

Dates: November 14, 2024 - November 16, 2024

Day 1: Thursday - November 14, 2024

1. Opening Greetings

- Indigenous Greeting & In-Person Smudging
- Human Rights Committee Greeting
- Land Acknowledgment
- Equality Statement
- UN Declaration
- Opening Remarks by Fred Hahn (CUPE Ontario President)

2. Panel Discussion – Mobilizing/Organizing Young Workers

Mobilizing and organizing young workers is crucial for the vitality and sustainability of the labor movement. Facilitators emphasized the following points regarding the importance of engaging young members:

- **Infusing New Energy and Perspectives**
Young workers bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm, essential for innovation and adapting to evolving workplace challenges. Their active participation ensures the union remains dynamic and responsive.
- **Developing Future Union Leaders**
Engaging young members in union activities and leadership roles prepares them to take on future responsibilities, ensuring continuity and the preservation of institutional knowledge within the union.
- **Addressing Unique Challenges Faced by Young Workers**
Young workers are part of “**equity seeking group**”, often encounter specific issues such as job insecurity, wage disparities, and barriers to advancement. Mobilizing them allows the union to effectively advocate for solutions tailored to challenges young workers face throughout different sectors within CUPE.

Day 2: Friday - November 15, 2024

1. Opening Remarks by Yolanda McClean
2. Mental Health in Workplace
 - **Identify and Mitigate Psychosocial Hazards**

Recognize workplace factors such as excessive workload, lack of control, and workplace violence that can negatively impact mental health. Implement measures to reduce these hazards to promote psychological well being.
 - **Promote a Psychologically Safe Work Environment**

Foster a culture through active union mobilization that supports mental health by encouraging open discussions, providing mental health resources, and ensuring policies are in place to protect employees' psychological safety.
 - **Integrate Mental Health into Health and Safety Committees**

Include mental health as a regular agenda item in workplace health and safety committees to ensure continuous attention and action on related issues.
 - **Active Participation in Policy Development**
 - Young workers should be involved in active advocacy to create and implement mental health policies that reflect the needs and rights of fellow co-workers. This can be achieved through development of Young Workers Committee as well.
3. Affordability/Housing
 - **CUPE's Stance on Housing Crisis**

CUPE argues that housing affordability won't improve unless public housing expansion is included in the solution.
 - **Call for Public Housing Investment**

CUPE urges the federal government to fund new public housing at a scale necessary to address the national crisis.
 - **Criticism of Current Strategy**

Only 5% of the \$82B National Housing Strategy goes to community housing and it only maintains existing units not building new ones.
 - **Housing as a Human Right**

CUPE asserts that housing should be seen as a human right, not an asset for investment and that government must take responsibility.
 - **Decline in Public Housing Investment**

Canada's public housing stock is only 3.5%, half the OECD average, with no major federal investments since 1994.
 - **Workers and Housing Affordability**

Rising housing costs outpace wages, making it unaffordable for workers to live where they work, threatening public services.

- **CUPE's Housing Policy**

Calls for public funds for public interest, increased non-market housing, investor regulations, renter protections and Indigenous housing rights.

For financial literacy workshops, CUPE Ontario can provide free presentation, please reach out to vraniga@cupe.ca.

Workshops:

1. Introduction to CUPE (OLS)
2. Sexual Violence and Harassment at Work

These workshops are also available for union members on CUPE's website.

Day 3: Saturday - November 16, 2024

1. How to Get Involved with the Young Workers Committee & Human Rights Committee

The Human Rights Committee has a broad mandate in that it tackles minority and Indigenous issues, as well as homophobia, issues affecting persons with disabilities and women's issues. It holds an annual conference that brings together members of different equity-seeking groups to discuss issues that affect all such groups, and to plan strategy to further the goals of equity within the union and more broadly in society.

At the Human Rights Conference, CUPE Ontario elects' members to the following committees: Indigenous, International Solidarity, Pink Triangle, Racial Justice, Workers with Disabilities and Young Workers

In order to inquire more regarding membership please reach out to a CUPE rep at info@cupe.on.ca.

Key Reflection & Discussion Points

1. Empowering Young Workers
2. Importance of Workplace Mental Health
3. Housing Affordability & Worker Stability
4. Strengthening Union Advocacy

Summary & Takeaways:

The CUPE Ontario Young Workers Conference 2024 brought together young professionals from various sectors to engage in meaningful discussions on workplace mental health, housing affordability, and union activism. With insightful panel discussions, interactive workshops and networking opportunities, the event successfully empowered young workers to take active roles in their workplaces communities and unions.

Conclusion: The conference provided an invaluable platform for young workers to connect, learn and mobilize for stronger representation within CUPE and the broader labor movement. The sessions on mental health and housing affordability highlighted pressing issues faced by young workers today and the workshops offered practical tools for advocacy and leadership development.