



National Officers' Convention Report

Highlights from CUPE's 50th Anniversary Convention October 21–25, 2013 Quebec City, QC

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

A record crowd of almost 3,000 delegates, alternates, guests and staff gathered in beautiful Quebec City for our union's historic 50th anniversary convention.

Firstly we offer our sincere thanks to all who attended convention and made it a week worth remembering. We also thank all who participated in the convention online.

There were countless memories throughout the week and our top ten memories included:

1. Increasing CUPE strike pay by 50 per cent to \$300/week, the first raise since 1997, was a special moment, this matter hitting the floor just after convention had honoured the following three locals currently on the line:

CUPE 4616 – Town of Bonfield

CUPE 1281 – Continuing Education Students' Association of Ryerson

CUPE 389 – North Shore Winter Club

Please visit cupe.ca to learn more about these disputes and how your local can make donations to these groups.

2. One very powerful memory was on day one of convention seeing CUPE members on stage in uniform and seeing how delegates responded to this with an outpouring of cheers and well wishes. (<http://cupe50.ca/when-were-united-we-cant-lose>)
3. "Unions protect human dignity" (Tomson Highway).

The star-studded panel which preceded our first round of Strategic Directions debate was a memorable moment.

Renowned playwright and novelist, Tomson Highway; Quebec Student leader and media commentator, Martine Desjardins; Researcher and commentator Trish Hennessy, and popular Quebec journalist, Anne Lagacé Dowson combined to both validate CUPE's work and to push our union to keep organizing and speaking out. To see the full discussion, visit: <http://cupe50.ca/panel-discussion-labour-matters-reinventing-our-movement/>

4. A particularly moving moment was the debate to establish CUPE's first ever Worker of Colour award in the name of Brother Ed Blackman, a distinguished leader of our union.

Brother Blackman was a former CUPE 500 President (City of Winnipeg workers) and a General Vice-President of our National union and a founding member of our National Rainbow Committee.

5. The Rally in support of Quebec City Blue-Collar workers on Wednesday at noon was a resounding success. Hearing thousands of members from coast-to-coast buoyed the spirits of all CUPE 1638 members who all know they have the full support of CUPE members to achieve a fair deal with their employer.
6. The Monday night Equality forum was a tremendous success, anchored by individual CUPE members sharing their personal stories in a moving and powerful way.

CUPE members love hearing one another's stories and this year's Forum was a powerful series of teaching moments, moments that touched the record crowd that took the session in.

7. The creation of the new CUPE National Sector Council was an historic decision at convention. For the first time in 50 years, a space for quality gatherings of our sectors on a national basis will become a permanent fixture of our national union. Given the attacks we face in all sectors, this was a fitting and in our view good decision.
8. A series of labour and other special guests added greatly to our union including addresses by Tom Mulcair, Federal NDP leader; Ken Georgetti, CLC President, and Public Services International (PSI) General Secretary, Rosa Pavanelli.

We were also fortunate to have the national leaders of the Steelworkers, Unifor, and the Public Service Alliance of Canada take in portions of our convention. And a number of international guests: Ferdinand Gaité, National President of the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE) from the Philippines;

Lorraine Baitsiwe, Deputy President, and Moses Miya, Deputy General Secretary, of the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU); Maureen Le Marinel, President of UNISON, our sister union in the United Kingdom; and Maria Luisa Regalado, General Coordinator of CODEMUH – Honduran Women's Collective, all joined us at convention.

9. Rank and file members debating issues, with a record number of first-time speakers was a clear highlight of the week; it tells us that our union has great present and future leaders, whose collective wisdom saw a very substantial and progressive agenda adopted for the next two years. In addition to 38 resolutions adding to CUPE policy, the delegates discussed, amended and passed a Strategic Directions policy paper, which commits our union to reaching out to all of our members through our Fairness project and strengthening our ability to fight off attacks on our right to bargain and to speak out on behalf of working people.

10. Best lines of the week:

"Can you love a union?" (Stephen Lewis)

"Brother Chair, my name is Barry O'Neill, last time speaker".

For full convention coverage along with great photos and videos, visit cupe50.ca.

Thanks to all who made the week so special; now our work begins in terms of implementing the agenda we adopted and pushing back against all the forces who want to both challenge and destroy the progress of our first 50 years.

As we take our first steps into our next 50 years, let us never forget the past leaders and activists who built our union and let us resolve to strive to be just as effective as we lead today with an eye on our future members who want us to succeed.

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer