



Your Local Update

Fall 2018

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Message from your President, Kelly Belbin

Our AGM took place June 16 – 17 2018, in Niagara Falls. Our membership came out strong with 118 delegates registered. It was a great turnout, and we were excited to see so many new and returning members. This year we tried something a little different in the way we organized our workshops. On the Saturday we had a focus on Equity, and really wanted to engage our membership in a diverse and interesting way of training. We held 3 plenary sessions one and a half hours in length on Islamophobia facilitated, by Bilan Arte; Anti-Black Racism, facilitated by Rajeane Hoilett and LGBTQI+ issues, facilitated by Chandra-Li Paul. Delegates rotated through each plenary session, and we all came back together at the end to discuss intersectionality and how we can combat anti-black racism, islamaphobia, and homophobia in our union, workplaces, and communities.

On the Sunday, we conducted regular business, and I gave a report on what the Local has been up to since the Convention in April 2017. I have included some of the highlights of my report.

Events and Actions

- **ONDP Convention** in Toronto. We were also happy to be able to support our members who work for the ONDP in the work that they do to put on such an amazing event.
- **CLC convention** in May 2017.
- **COPE Ontario convention** in June 2017.
- **COPE Local 343 scholarship**, we had an overwhelming response, and awarded \$500.00 to 6 recipients.
- **Labour Day leads** to get members involved in **Labour Day** in their community, this initiative was also supported and acted upon by members of our Political Action Committee.
- **Political Action Committee** planning for the Locals first ever Political Action Conference, as well as the Provincial Election, and moving into the Municipal Elections. I'm sure we will see some very exciting new initiatives coming out of that committee over the next year.

- **COPE Ontario** held their first ever **Northern Summit**, and we sent 20 delegates to Thunder Bay to participate in building bridges to the north.
- **COPE Local 343 Fall School** was held in October 2017. Participants attended workshops on Anti-Oppression, Truth and Reconciliation, WSIB, and Mental Health. We also showed the film “A Better Man” with a focus on domestic violence.
- **Ontario Federation of Labour Convention** in November, where we were a part of the decision the labour movement made to endorse the NDP in the Provincial Election June 7, 2018.
- **Political Action Conference** in January 2018
- **Young Workers Summit** in January 2018
- **Federal NDP Convention** in February 2018, and our Local was there supporting the important work that COPE Local 225 members do as staff at the Federal NDP.
- **COPE/SEPB Mid Term Conference** in Victoria, BC in February 2018
- Our Union proudly supported strike action by CUPE University workers, and our union proudly supported them on their picket lines in Ottawa and Toronto!
- Our Local participated in the **campaign for 15 and fairness**, supporting the \$15 minimum wage through the “**I love Tim Horton’s Workers” campaign** by going to some Local Tim Hortons locations on Valentine’s Day and sharing information about workers’ rights, and what bill 148 changes mean to them.
- **Political Action training on political and community organizing**, where the direct action that came out of that training was a canvass for the Local Candidate in Oshawa, Jennifer French.
- **National Day of Mourning, April 28, 2018**, our Local endorsed and supported an initiative at a Local Mosque discussing the

issues of understanding Islamophobia, injuries, and violence at work.

- **COPE Ontario AGM** was held in May 2018, and our Local sent a full delegation to Hamilton, Ontario, where we were given the opportunity to participate in workshops and listened to some incredible speakers.
- **Worker Comp is a Right Injured Workers Rally** in June, we endorsed, and had members attend the Worker Comp is a Right Injured Workers Rally.

Unit action

Many of our units engaged in Bargaining this year. Our Union stood up and fought back against unfair and disrespectful working conditions, pension proposals, two tier wage rates and job classifications and won! Because of the leadership of Unit Bargaining Committee’s and the solidarity of our membership they showed our employer’s they would not back down. Congratulations to all of our units that won gains through bargaining.

Our Local has engaged in some actions in support of protecting our members, especially against the attacks on memberships through raiding.

Through Provincial Elections in June we doubled the seats that the NDP holds, which also increases the membership of the ONDP CA unit.

We would also like welcome in **three new units** to COPE Local 343. One new unit at **Auto Traders, Niagara Legal Clinic, and Justice Niagara.**

New updates

Our social media presence has been an incredible asset to our Local this year. We have been using it to get our message out whether it be regarding issues that units are facing in bargaining, documenting events that our members are organizing and attending or to get out a political message that will help our members.

We have a couple of active committees I just wanted to make special mention of, the Young Workers Committee, and the PAC Committee. New members are always encouraged to join and participate in these committees!

COPE Members Among Largest Canadian Contingent at CBTU International Convention

Submitted by: *Ogho Ikhalo*

The 47th annual Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) International Convention, in Orlando, Florida this year, welcomed its largest contingent of Canadian delegates from May 22-27. The convention, themed “47 Years Strong, From Surviving to Thriving,” brought together approximately 800 trade unionists from across North America, including 50 dedicated delegates from Canada, to discuss some of the challenges – particularly the increased racial discrimination – many workers of colour face in today’s workplace. Three dynamic COPE 343 members, Valarie Roberts-Francis, Carol Baker and Ogho Ikhalo, joined fellow CBTU members from across Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Nunavut to ensure Canada had a solid voice at the international platform.

This year’s convention included a pivotal conversation on environmental racism that explored the impact of climate change on racialized and indigenous communities across Canada and the United States. The panel, co-lead by several members of CBTU’s Canadian contingent, discussed how socially-marginalized, racial-minority communities are often subjected to disproportionate exposure to pollutants, denial of access to sources of ecological benefits (clean air, water, and natural resources) or both. As an aside, one only needs to look at recent (2017) hurricanes in the Caribbean islands of Puerto Rico and Barbuda – both part of North America – as evidence of the often-indigent treatment of survivors of similar humanitarian crises by the world stage. The panelists highlighted other case studies of environmental racism across borders and encouraged delegates to develop strategies that ensure voices within our community are heard throughout the transition to a green economy. Further, the Labour community can and should play a critical role in creating spaces for membership engagement in the struggle to secure green jobs for all.

Civil Engagement and “staying focused on the bigger picture,” were the convention’s unambiguous messages. CBTU International President, Rev. Terrence Melvin, who was re-elected by acclamation for another four-year term, stressed that “civil engagement needs to be our anchor for change and will make our union/labour efforts more effective.” Fundamentally, we must work to build relationships and respect the power of dissent to better enable non-activists to go from being observers to activists that can initiate robust community-led engagement.



CBTU Canada brought forward four adopted resolutions that will make up the international organization’s mandate moving forward, including:

- **Environmental Racism Workshops**, which call on unions to incorporate environmental racism workshops into their union education programs;
- **Shutting down hate**, which encourages labour councils to support anti-racist, anti-oppression and equity seeking groups to organize against hate;
- **Restorative Justice for Black and African Canadians**, which calls on the Government of Canada to issue a formal apology to African Canadians for Canada’s role in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and implement an effective pathway to restorative justice; and
- **Organizing to Win**, which encourages labour councils to participate in Black Votes Matter initiatives to actively support candidates for office who unapologetically advocate for black trade unionists.

Perhaps the key takeaway from delegates, certainly for attending COPE members that convened in America’s ‘Sunshine State,’ is that “if you are not at the table, you’re likely on the menu.” We must push ahead, mobilize and continue to build a true resistance against systemic oppression that limits racialized workers and equity seeking groups in Ontario, Canada and across global borders.

Constitution Corner

Submitted by: Lorraine Boucher

COPE National has approved the Local 343’s Constitution, as amended at the June 2017 Biennial Convention. It is available on our web site. Also available on our website is the current policies and procedures, which were updated to incorporate the resolutions passed at the April 2018 Biennial General Meeting.

The COPE Local 343 Executive Board is developing a ‘Resolutions’ page on the web site, which will contain the resolutions brought to a Biennial General Meeting and to the Biennial Convention. It will also report on the status of those resolutions, such as adopted, amended and adopted, or defeated.

Speaking of resolutions, the next opportunity for members to consider amendments to the Local 343 Constitution and to its policies and procedures will be at the April 2019 Biennial Convention. Bargaining Units must submit their proposed changes to the Executive Board by Friday, February 1, 2019.

Local 343 Membership Survey Closes. Report Coming in the Near Future!

Local 343 recently undertook its first-ever comprehensive Membership Survey! Broken into two parts, Your Workplace and You, and, Your Union and You, the goal of the survey is to help gain a more comprehensive overview of the membership, the challenges they face in their workplaces, and what they’re looking for from their union. While a report outlining the results and feedback received won't be released for a

little while, here's some early factoids:

- over 14% of the membership responded to the survey
- 51.98% of respondents would like to see Conflict Resolution and Anti- Oppression education offered at a future fall school
- tied at 41.38% affirmative for each, respondents felt that increased workload and a shortage of staff are the biggest issues in their workplace



These three factoids are only a very small window into what the survey has yielded and we're excited to release a more detailed report in the near future! Thanks to everyone who took the time to complete the Survey and we can't wait to share more of the results with the membership!

PAC Sign Making

Members of Local 343 got together and had a great day making signs for Labour Day. Check out their amazing work...



Another successful Labour Day!

COPE Local 343 members across the province gathered, marched and celebrated the achievements of workers on Labour Day.

This year in Toronto, in support of our brothers and sisters from IATSE.....the parade concluded at Lamport Stadium where members went on to enjoy a delicious bbq and entertainment.

It was great seeing our members out wearing their COPE 343 swag and enjoying the day.



Coming in 2019...The Inaugural Liz Fong Activist Award!

Submitted by: Casey Oraa

At our AGM held in June 2018, the Local presented a sneak peak of the application for the upcoming inaugural Liz Fong Activist Award.

Debuting in 2019, the Liz Fong Activist Award was established in honour of Liz Fong – an activist involved in the Local for decades, and the longest serving President of Local 343. As Liz tirelessly fought for the members and for workers' rights, the Liz Fong Activist Award honours this spirit and seeks to highlight the fantastic activism carried out by our members in the movement and in their communities.

The application for the Award will be released in winter 2019. Following the application deadline, the Local's Executive Board will review the nominations and decide on who will be the first-ever recipient.

The Award will be presented at the Local's 2019 Convention. The recipient of the Award will also receive a token commemorating their achievement and have their name added to a plaque that will hang at the Local's office.

In future years, the application process will follow a similar pattern with the application being released in the winter of each year and the Award being presented at the AGM or Convention – whichever event is occurring in that particular year.

Know a fantastic activist that's a member of Local 343? This is the perfect opportunity to recognize them so keep your eyes open as the application will be being released this upcoming winter!

Life Long Learning

Submitted by: Tanya La Rush

With summer behind us, some of us are finally finding the time to renew, reenergize and think about possibly attending a class or workshop. Our local has budgeted an amount for education for folks who are looking to attend programs or participate in various labour studies.

Members are encouraged to apply for funding through the Education Committee for costs associated to the program or studies such as per diem, travel, registration cost and release time from your employer.

All are subject to preapproval and based on the course requested. We cannot, however, fund courses or workshops that directly impact your job (ie. accounting or software learning courses).

Our Local's Fall School and COPE Ontario Educationals are open to all 343 members and does not require pre-approval (subject to capacity limits so we encourage you to register early) if you plan on attending one of the COPE Ontario Educationals, you are automatically approved and do not need to seek pre-approval. If release time is required, send your request to the President, Kelly Belbin. For these and all other guidelines and practice, please refer to the COPE Local 343 Policies and Procedures Guide for comprehensive information.

CUPW On Strike – Stand With Your Posties!

Submitted by: Casey Oraa

As the holiday season gets closer and closer, CUPW is currently in the midst of rotating strikes against their employer, Canada Post. While the Employer continues to remain profitable year after year, Canada Post continues to do so at the expense of its workers. At the bargaining table, the members of CUPW are fighting for greater improvements to health and safety, more equality for the workforce and the creation of more full time jobs rather than precarious work.

While CUPW continues the fight for its members, they've also been fighting for a greater, more accessible country for everyone else. One such push they've been making is for postal banking. Successful in many countries around the world, postal banking ensures that everyone has access to banking. In the same way that roads connect us all across this fine country, while there isn't a bank in every town, village or city, there are post offices and postal banking offers a viable way for everyone to have access to banking. You can read up more on postal banking by checking out www.postalbanking.ca/en/campaign/postal-banking.

With the strike ongoing and at the time of publication oppressive legislation to end the strike being debated, it's important that we stand in solidarity with the members of CUPW as they not only fight for their future but for a brighter future for us all from coast-to-coast. As the holiday season approaches, it's important to remember who ensures we receive our mail and packages not only during this time, but as well, year round. These workers work through tough conditions year round and we should support them in their fight. To keep up to date on where CUPW is striking next as well as how you can offer support, check out www.cupw.ca, Twitter at www.twitter.com/cupw or on Facebook.

Political action upcoming actions/events

The PAC has been very busy attending and participating in various actions and events such as:

- Municipal campaigning
- OFL, Fight for 15\$ Action in Ajax – Saturday
- PC Convention Action – Friday, November 16th
- Rally for CUPW – Wednesday, November 21st
- Canadian Labour Int'l Film Festival (COPE 343 social) – Friday, November 23rd

We have a number of days of observance coming up

- December 1st, International Aids Day
- December 6th, Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada
- December 10th, International Human Rights Day

Letters of Solidarity

We will be sending letters of support for USW's campaign to get Canadian based companies to support workers rights in their supply chain. We will also be writing a letter of support for CUPW members that we will send to the PM and leaders of Canada Post.

For more information on any upcoming events or if you're curious about what the Political Action Committee is up to and how you can be involved, please don't hesitate to contact the Committee at pac@cope343.com.



2019 COPE Local 343 Convention

April 12 – 14, 2019
Intercontinental Hotel,
Toronto

Please mark your calendar!

The call-out will be sent early in the new year. Resolutions must be submitted by February 1, 2019.