



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The benefits of our new provincial structure were evident at the First Annual Meeting of COPE Ontario held in Thunder Bay the weekend of September 27, 2008. With over 60 members attending from across Ontario, and an exciting agenda which included the launch of COPE Ontario's most recent educational dealing with Conflict Resolution, the meeting proved to be a great opportunity for sharing information and simply getting to know fellow members better in an informal setting.

We were fortunate to have a number of National Officers with us at the opening of our meeting - Brother Serge Cadieux, our National President, and our Legal Counsel, Pierre Gingrais, joined us from Quebec; and Sister Gwenne Farrell, our National Secretary-Treasurer, made the trip from British Columbia to be with us.

Following brief introductions from the Locals and opening remarks from Brother Cadieux, Janice Best, Director of COPE

Ontario, made a timely and informative presentation outlining the new, unified structure which is COPE Ontario and describing, among other things, how we fit in on a national level. Sister Best's presentation was a recap of some of the extensive province-wide consultation which took place in creating COPE Ontario, and we can all be proud of the foundation which has been built.

The COPE Ontario Executive Board has been operating successfully under our new provincial structure for about a year and a half. Naturally, the Board has experienced the growing pains that arise in any new organization; however, we work tremendously well together as a group, and have accomplished a great deal in what has in fact been a relatively short period of time.

Thanks to all the Locals for their participation at our First Annual Meeting. We look forward to the next one, which will be held in the Spring of 2009, location to be announced.



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

COPE ONTARIO IS MEETING ITS MANDATE

ORGANIZING

One of the things COPE Ontario is responsible for is to organize new members into our union. We currently have two full time organizers on staff, working out of our Toronto office, thanks to subsidies received from the COPE National Union. The National Union subsidies cover the costs for

almost one hundred per cent of one organizer and seventy-five per cent of the second organizer. The seventy-five per cent for the second organizer is a pilot project of one year, to be reviewed in May 2009. We have also developed, through our training program last winter, twenty volunteer organizers.

We have been able to use a number of these volunteers in recent campaigns. Volunteer organizers are paid lost time, when required, and expenses. This program of training and using volunteer organizers has been so successful that we plan on hosting a second training program to add to this pool of talented people.

We have been certified at Kid's Corral Child Care, Your Neighbourhood Credit Union at Windsor and LaSalle branches, Unite/Here (trade union employees) and at the Unity Project, a group home, in London, Ontario. One of our volunteer organizers, Matt Dumas, worked very closely with the Unity Project group. In fact, Brother Dumas will be the recipient of the first payment from the National Union's organizing incentive for COPE members. Under this plan,

members who provide the name of an unorganized contact which results in a certificate will receive \$3.00 per employee as a bonus payment. Congratulations Matt!

I encourage all of you to think about unorganized workplaces that would be a good fit for COPE. We have members working in health care, education, finance and insurance, government agencies, not for profit agencies, industry, legal offices, other unions and central labour bodies. You can find COPE members almost anywhere. We are particularly interested in organizing more credit unions at this time. COPE currently represents the majority of unionized credit unions in Ontario. Under the National Union organizing incentive program a contact which results in certification for a group of 100 members would mean \$300.00 to you.

MEMBER MENTORING

This is another area we committed to do more work in, and I believe we are succeeding here too. Training and using our volunteer organizers is one example of developing our members. We have also been encouraging trained members to co-instruct educational workshops with one of our staff. I am extremely pleased that we have been able to pull talented people from our membership for special projects as well. Currently, our temporary organizer, Trish Boyle, has come from one of Local 343's bargaining units. Mary Stalteri, who is replacing one of our staff representatives, comes from a

Local 343 bargaining unit; and Elaine Sinha, who is working on a special assignment with our School Board locals, comes to us from the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board unit of Local 527.

COPE Ontario wants to encourage members to get involved in areas of interest they may have. If you want to get involved in a way we have not currently opened up any opportunities, let me know.

MUSCULOSKELTAL DISORDERS (MSD's)

The number of workplace injuries is increasing every day and their onset can be immediate or develop over time. Many of the less obvious types of injuries are soft tissue injuries that include: sprains, strains, carpal tunnel syndrome, subluxations, repetitive strain injuries, all of which fall into the class referred to as Musculoskeletal Disorders, or MSD's. .

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are the number one type of lost-time claims reported to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

Over 2.3 million Canadian adults have experienced a repetitive strain injury (RSI) serious enough to limit their normal activities according to Statistics Canada. These injuries are a result of repetitive motions, physically demanding duties, and unsafe or ergonomically incorrect working conditions. As office and professional workers, we often don't think of our work as physically demanding by conventional definitions, but it is. Sitting at a desk typing is physically demanding, especially if we are not performing these duties in a proper ergonomic fashion.

The likelihood of workers experiencing MSD injuries is more the result of diverse factors that can affect workers of any age when the demands of the job exceed the capabilities of the person doing it.

Workplace programs to deal with possible MSDs include putting controls in place to reduce workers' exposure to MSD risk factors, advising and training workers about MSD risk factors, and encouraging workers to participate in health and safety programs through early reporting of MSD symptoms.

As workers, it is our responsibility to report any injuries that are work-related, including soft tissue injuries and RSI's. Once you have been injured or become aware of an injury, you need to report it to your Health and Safety Committee immediately, **regardless of whether or not you experience lost time from work.**

In the absence of a Health and Safety Committee, you should inform your Steward who will contact your Staff Representative to report the injury.

Proper documentation is imperative and isn't happening nearly enough. It is important to report this type of injury as it can result in disabilities or work limitations later in your career.

Without accurate reporting, it is difficult to prove a workplace injury; especially in the case of RSI's and soft tissue injuries as the cause is not always obvious. As a health and safety committee member or steward, it is your responsibility to accurately report the injury/incident and to effectively address the issues at hand.

Once the injury is established, it is your employer's duty to accommodate according to the Ontario Human Rights Legislation and specifically the OHRC Disability and the Duty to Accommodate Policy.

Assessments can be done cooperatively with the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario workers (OHCOW) to make your workplace more ergonomically correct focusing not only on accommodation but also injury prevention.

OHCOW is a resource available to all workers in Ontario, for more information please visit www.ohcow.on.ca.

Injury reporting is a crucial element in keeping your workplace safe; however, prevention is equally important. According to Section 43 of Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act, workers can refuse work they have reason to believe is likely to endanger their immediate or long-term health or that of another worker. If you believe there is a workplace hazard, report this to your Health and Safety Committee or Steward immediately. They will investigate the hazard and take the necessary steps to correct the situation. As well, it is against the law for a worker to be punished for refusing work they believe to be unsafe. It is your right to refuse unsafe work without reprisal.

For more information on health and safety, your rights and obligations, log on to the Worker's Health and Safety Centre (WHSC) Website at www.whsc.on.ca. RSI Awareness day is February 29 – see the WHSC website for more information.

Submitted by Trish Boyle and Terry Hall

PROVINCIAL BARGAINING IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

By now most people have heard that the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Unions representing Educational Support Workers entered into Provincial Discussion Table (PDT) Agreement in May and reached a settlement.

The highlights of the negotiated settlement are:

- 3% increase in wages in each of the next 4 years beginning September 1, 2008
- 7 hour day for Educational Assistants by 2011
- Educational Assistants by 2011 will work and get paid for all Professional Development days.
- Control over Professional Development funds for all support workers
- Increased staffing for elementary school secretaries

COPE Ontario represents 7 bargaining units who have members in the educational field:

- **Local 103** based in Pembroke represents Educational Assistants and Clerical Workers at the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board.
- **Local 429** based in Timmins represent Clerical Workers at the District School Board Ontario North East.
- **Local 454** based in Thunder Bay represents Clerical Workers at the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board, Clerical Workers at the Lakehead District School Board and Educational Assistants, Clerical

Workers and Custodian and Maintenance Workers at the Nakina District School Area Board.

- **Local 527** based in Hamilton represents Educational Assistants at the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.
- **Local 529** based in North Bay represents Educational Assistants, Clerical Workers and Social Workers at the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board.

One of the criteria placed on this process by the Ministry of Education (MOE) is that in order to obtain the funding promised, all of the Collective Agreements must be negotiated and ratified by all parties by November 30, 2008. I am sure that you can imagine and appreciate how fast that date is looming. However, I am pleased to report the following:

- **Local 103 has reached a tentative settlement** and the union will have a ratification vote on November 18.
- **Local 429 has applied for conciliation** and November 13 is scheduled for negotiations. The employer is looking for many concessions from the bargaining unit. The Local, on the other hand, went into this round of negotiations with very few demands due to the compensation of the PDT Agreement, but aren't in the mood to give up hard fought gains.

- **Local 454 –Thunder Bay Catholic D.S.B. has reached a tentative settlement** that has not yet been ratified. **Lakehead D.S.B. has ratified** a settlement and all documentation has been sent to the MOE to release funding. The unit in **Nakina has completed part of their negotiations on local issues** and are meeting in Toronto on November 3 to insert the PDT Agreement as per MOE instructions in dealing with School Authorities.
- **Local 527 has ratified a settlement** and all documentation has been sent to the MOE to release funding. This unit had to open an unexpired C/A and was not looking to change any of the current C/A other than to insert the PDT Agreement. This was accomplished.

- **Local 529 has applied for conciliation.** Dates set with the conciliation officer are November 11, 16 and 17. It is hoped that this will encourage the employer to negotiate.

I am confident that the 2 groups in conciliation will be settled successfully and be able to gain from the compensation package for wages etc, as agreed to with the MOE. The groups that have a tentative settlement to ratify, I am sure will be able to report acceptance by the membership. It has been a whirlwind of activity meeting the deadline but once all is said and done the individual members in each local will benefit greatly.

Submitted By Elaine Sinha

LOCAL UNION PROFILE

LOCAL 343

COPE Local 343 obtained its Charter in September 1956 and is a composite local representing a large membership throughout Ontario. Many of our members work in union Offices, such as Communications, Energy & Paperworkers and Canadian Auto Workers; construction unions, such as Boilermakers and Ironworkers; and Education and Teacher Associations, such as Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Ontario Ombudsman. We also have members in other offices, such as Greenpeace, the Ontario NDP and Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. In addition, COPE Local 343 has the most certifications for credit unions, a total

of nine (9) in the province, with a large number located in the Hamilton-Niagara Region. We are a unique local union within Canada, with a membership of approximately 1,500 and over 100 collective agreements, many in smaller (one or two person) workplaces.

Given our size and diversity, keeping members active in our local is a challenge we always try to meet. We encourage participation at our General Council meetings (held every six months between Conventions) and our Biennial Conventions. Indeed, the local's structure is designed to foster membership participation at these meetings and in all local activities.

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S CANADIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference evolved out of the Duke of Edinburgh's Study Conference established in 1956. The GGCLC was formed with the same premise as the Duke of Edinburgh Conference but with a Pan Canadian focus.

The Conference is made up of people from labour, business, government, non-governmental organizations, educational and cultural organizations. Participants are selected by application followed by an interview. The 2008 Conference was the seventh since its establishment. I was pleased to be selected and I was part of the British Columbia Study Group. We toured many regions of this beautiful western coastal province from Trail, Nelson, Castlegar, Penticton, Osoyoos,

Richmond, Port Moody, Prince Rupert and Vancouver. Our mission was to meet with the leaders in each of the communities we visited and find out what they have done to address gaps in services, outreach, economic development and other issues that had a positive outcome on their community. In each community we met people who demonstrated a sense of pride in their community.

There were challenges for the group from the outset in trying to deal with the diverse backgrounds and dynamics of the people involved. We overcame many of these challenges as we got to know each other.

This has been the most rewarding experience I have had to date in my life. It taught me not to judge people based on my internal biases, to listen, to understand the difference between leadership and activism and to offer opinion only when necessary.

I would encourage anyone who is in mid career and wanting to develop or hone their leadership skills to apply for the next Conference in 2012.

To find out more about the 2008 Conference or the Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference in general please go to www.leadershipcanada.ca

Submitted by Colin Argyle

November & December Educational Workshops

Workshops may be scheduled in the evening upon request, in order to accommodate members who may be unable to attend during the week or on weekends. Individual workshops may also be scheduled for bargaining units upon request and at a location convenient for the members of the bargaining unit.

Please note: Ten (10) Registrants are required for all workshops. All registrations must be received five (5) days prior to the scheduled workshop.

COPE Ontario is a Fragrance-Free workplace.

<u>Workshop</u>	<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Human Rights & the Duty To Accommodate	December 11, 2008 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.	COPE Ontario Head Office

For more information regarding the scheduling of workshops, please contact Maureen O'Halloran, Staff Representative or Endera Singh at 416-703-8515, ext. 223; fax: 416-703-8520; email: esingh@copeontario.ca.

Please visit our web site at www.copeontario.ca to see the Workshop Listing for the Winter 2009 courses that are being offered.

Looking to the future of our union: The COPE Ontario Young Workers Committee

In April of 2008 at the COPE Local 343 general council at the Delta Meadowvale, Sister Trish Boyle and I came up with the idea of starting up a Young Workers Committee. We approached the Local's Executive board with a letter which was presented at their next meeting where the idea was passed with unanimous support.

The next step was to get COPE Ontario on board. Trish and I were both heading to the COPE Ontario educational conference in Thunder Bay back in September. That is where we made a presentation to the Ontario Council with regard to having this committee operate at the Ontario Council level. There was much productive and encouraging dialogue and, in the end, the Executive passed the proposal, again with unanimous support.

The purpose of this committee is to create a venue for young COPE Ontario members to become active in their union and to create a smooth transition from the current leadership to the leaders of tomorrow. Through organizing the young members, we can learn from our leadership, who has years of experience in the labour movement and hopefully, our young members today can shape into great leaders of tomorrow. Having this type of succession plan in place and investing in our young members today will ensure that COPE Ontario is heading in a progressive, responsible direction for the future.

Very soon, surveys will be distributed to all of the stewards in COPE Ontario. The surveys are meant to be given to all younger workers in their units and sent back to COPE Ontario for review. We are doing this for a couple of reasons; firstly, to inform younger members that there is an opportunity to get involved in COPE that is specifically geared towards them.

Secondly, we want to get a picture of the population of young members in COPE, which will enable us to make educated decisions on how to proceed with the Committee.

The Committee has established an age parameter of 35 years old to participate. This is over and above the maximum age is at the OFL and CLC level (theirs is 30 years of age). Other than the age boundary, every COPE Ontario member is encouraged to participate. We will be meeting on a regular basis via conference calls, face to face meetings etc. In addition to the regular meetings, we are planning on hosting a Young Workers conference for next fall. Having many different perspectives on a Committee such as this is a great way to have objective dialogue and helps to create multiple options when brainstorming ideas and direction.

I currently represent COPE at the Ontario Federation of Labour's Workers Under 30 Committee (WU30) and at the National Level by sitting on the newly formed Young Workers Group at the Canadian Labour Congress. The CLC's group is actually represented by three COPE members from all across

the county! This representation of COPE is a great way to increase our clout and I think it is a sign of healthy growth of our union.

This is a very exciting time for young COPE Ontario members. The Committee has a set of objectives and goals that we are planning on carrying out to organize our young members internally and to represent COPE Ontario in the broader Labour Movement. To achieve these goals, we need young members to participate and become active!

I encourage every young member to fill out their surveys and return them as soon as possible in order to help this process move along. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact either myself, or Sister Boyle.

The success of our union tomorrow depends on our collective ability to organize, educate and mobilize our young members today.

Submitted by Matt Dumas
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