

NEWSLETTER

COUSA held its summer conference in Toronto from June 14 to June 16, 2013 and it was a great success.



Fred Hahn, President of CUPE Ontario

Saturday morning's panel of speakers was all so well spoken and entertaining that we reluctantly agreed to a coffee break. The panel spoke on "Austerity and Ontario Universities". Fred Hahn, Ontario President of CUPE, started the presentation, followed by Yuk-Sem Won, of OPSEU, Erin Weir, of the United Steelworkers and Joel Duff of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

Governments in Canada and elsewhere have embraced "austerity" as a necessary public policy to eliminate budgetary deficits and ensure future prosperity. What does this mean for Universities? As funding for Universities decreases so do the number of students and therefore our jobs. Universities will once again become unaffordable for the average person. \$160 million has been cut from post-secondary education while Ontario continues to have the highest tuition rate in the country. Government austerity measures also mean wage freezes, privatization, layoffs and closures. The government austerity programs targets all of our social programs, hospital budgets, childcare, home care, affordable housing and fewer and fewer Ontarians will be able to access the services they need.



Yuk-sem Won, OPSEU



Erin Weir, economist for USW

Erin Weir, economist for the United Steelworkers said that this era was not as severe – yet – as the period that we saw with the Mike Harris years when there was an absolute decline in the percent funding to Ontario universities. Still the frozen transfers while student population is increasing and inflation rises, translate into a real drop in base funding to universities.

Communications Director for the Ontario Federation of Labour, Joel Duff disputed the use of the word "austerity" on the grounds that it implies that funding cuts are somehow just a necessary part of our era. As we know economies run in cycles and the revenue to governments follows those cycles. What has made the revenue of the current government worse is the misguided belief that corporate tax cuts would stimulate the economy. As the companies have done is sit on the cash. In addition, the cutting of government spending at the weakest point of the business cycle has made the downturn worse.

Our next workshop was brought to us by Cammie Pierce, CAW. She spoke on the changes to Employment Insurance caused by the federal budget.

The new EI system creates a discriminatory 3 tier system - long tenure claimant, occasional claimant and frequent claimant. Two-thirds of the regular EI claims are made by those who are an *occasional* or *frequent* claimant.



Joel Duff, Communications Director, OFL



Cammie Peirce, CAW

recreational facility workers, fishing industry, truckers and many others.

For a person who puts in an *occasional* claim, for the first 6 weeks they get 80% of their prior wage and seek a job in their usual occupation. After 6 weeks they will only be able to collect 80% of their prior wage and have to seek a “similar” job. After 18 weeks they will collect 70% of their prior wage but have to accept any job able to perform, with on-the-job training if required.

For a person who puts in a *frequent* claim, from the start of their claim they collect 80% of their prior wage and have to seek a similar job. After 6 weeks they receive 70% of prior wage and have to accept any job able to perform, with on-the-job training if required. These changes affect those in the education sector and seasonal workers such as forestry, road workers, and

After our lunch the afternoon workshop was on “Dealing with Difficult People” and was facilitated by the Achieve Training Centre. Patrick Parent was the presenter.

There was a lot to cover in an afternoon and everyone was very engaged with the facilitator. There were a number of good stories to listen to and to learn from. Difficult people seem to be in four common categories – the chronically angry person, the resistant person, the passive-aggressive person and the bullying person. The instructor and participants discussed each type of “difficult” person that they have met throughout their careers. We were taught how to deal with the different types of difficult person through classroom exercises, discussion and on hand experiences.

Friday evening’s information sharing session saw us finding out what was going on at each other’s workplace.

We wrapped up the weekend holding the Business meeting with the COUSA delegates on Sunday morning.

**The COUSA Fall Conference will be held in Toronto, November 1 to 3, 2013.
Plan to be there!**

(Details for the COUSA fall conference coming soon.)