**CUPE Trades Conference 2022 Niagara Falls** November 21st - 24th 2022

**Fred Hahn** opened the conference with a lot of vigour and enthusiasm, He spoke a lot of lower wages for union employees vs private sector employees. Fred spoke of the recent schoolteachers strike and the unfair government mandates that made the strike happen. He stated that government basically re-wrote rules in their favour to bully the employees.

**Yolanda McClean** spoke of Bill 124 limiting wage increases for Ontario public service employees for three years, while private sector employees are getting much higher wage increases.

**Graham Cox** talked of a trade survey that will compare certified union skilled trade workers to non union private sector trade workers. This survey will compare wages, tool allowances, benefits, uniforms, and other items in order to see how they can make union skilled trade jobs more appetizing. Graham also talked a lot of wage increases and that they are no where near in line with cost-of-living increases.

**Sudbury MPP Jamie West** talked in detail about safety; he stated that union worksites are statistically safer worksites. He talked of “growing” the trades and that the average age of tradespeople is 28 years old. Jamie claims that trades numbers are slipping, and trades are being “forgotten”. He would like to get rid of Bill 124, which we know includes a wage increase cap of 1% for many public sector jobs. Jamie stated that the provincial government “starves” public sector employees and offers private sector solutions instead of building our public sector jobs.

**Brynn Bourke from BC building trades** talked about the de-regulation of compulsory trades in British Columbia in 2001 resulting in a huge decline of quality within the trades. She mentioned that the LNG (liquified Natural Gas) industry brought back the Skilled trade regulation to the province for good, and obvious reasons. There need to be some sort of regulation and base rules for trades when undertaking such huge projects. There is an apprenticeship mandate trying to restore the compulsory trades system. Brynn says they are very short on skilled trades. Women in skilled trades was very good at one point, but retention is poor; A lot felt they were driven out of the trades. The de-regulation of the trades in BC made health and safety go downhill considerably.

**Pam Parks from CUPE Local 6364** Talked about “AROAP” anti-racism-organizational-action-plan. Pam also mentioned “WILD” Women-in-leadership-development; This is a program for indigenous, black, and racialized women, it is training in anti-racism and anti-oppression. More information on both programs can be found on CUPE Ontario’s site.

**Panel of experts:** Talks about why apprentices aren’t finishing their programs: A lot of talk of discrimination and bullying. Some folks were talking of management not wanting apprentices to finish C of Q for reason of having to pay a higher wage for doing the same job they were doing as an apprentice. This is horrible thinking.

There was talk of Privatization, some believe is a very real threat.

The panel mentioned that unionized sites are 31% safer; this was also mentioned by Jamie West earlier in the conference.

They mentioned they would like to see “shop” classes brought back into elementary, and high schools.

Mental Health was a big topic too, as Two panel members **(Ivan Dawns of IUPAT DC46 and Ticha Albino IBEW 353)** Talked about support groups for mental health and “Mental first-aid” which is a new idea about watching for folks struggling with issues and offering help.

**Brandi Ferenc** Talked about her journey into the mostly male dominated trades. She is a 313a Refrigeration Mechanic/Gas Fitter 1 and HVAC instructor. She has a mechanical aptitude and was drawn to the trades for the instant gratification of fixing and completing jobs rather than the mundane office type work that the world thought she should do. She talked of the many, many, obstacles that she overcame to get where she is today.

**Recruitment and retention Breakout room**: Mostly spoke of Wages and low numbers of apprentices. “What can be done to bring in trades to locals”? Talked of completing “job evaluations” and adding specific trade reps to the local union groups.

**Heat stress Breakout room**: Talked of heat being more of an issue due to climate change. Talked of the OHCOW heat stress awareness guide (I brought the book to union President) Talked in detail of OHSA regulations.

**By-laws/structure/constitution Breakout room**: Mostly Q and A with members. Good talks, too much to review.

**Angela MacEwan from the Labour Market Information Council** spoke about inflation. She spoke of the CPI (Consumer Price Index) From October 2020 there has been a steady increase. January 2022 had a spike in transportation costs. September 2021 food costs spiked and everything else steadily climbing. Angela explained that inflation reflects what happened 12 months prior and went into detail of how inflation is applied. She showed us that public sector wage increases in the last two years have been 0.5%-2% while private sector increases have been from between 2%-10%. She mentioned we should be bargaining Cost of Living clauses.