

Report on CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Conference 2026

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Local: CUPE 3906

Conference Dates: February 10–13, 2026

1. Introduction

I would like to sincerely thank CUPE 3906 for providing me with the opportunity to attend the CUPE Secretary-Treasurer Conference 2026. It was an enriching and educational experience that allowed me to learn more about the responsibilities of union financial officers, financial governance within locals, and emerging issues affecting unions across Ontario.

The conference brought together CUPE leaders, financial officers, trustees, and members from various locals across the province. The sessions provided valuable knowledge on financial management, fraud prevention, governance practices, and emerging policy issues. In addition to the educational content, the conference also provided opportunities to network with union leaders and members from across Ontario and Canada.

I attended the conference from February 10 to February 13, 2026, participating in the opening sessions, keynote presentations, workshops, and discussions on financial accountability and union governance.

2. Opening Session and Welcome

The conference began with registration followed by the opening remarks, which set the tone for the event. The session included an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement, an Equality Statement, and the Declaration of the International Decade for People of African Descent, reinforcing CUPE's commitment to equity, inclusion, and reconciliation.

Speakers included Fred Hahn, President of CUPE Ontario, and Dawn Bellerose, CUPE Ontario Third Vice-President, who welcomed participants and emphasized the important role that secretary-treasurers and trustees play in maintaining transparency and accountability within union locals.

The evening concluded with a Meet and Greet Reception, which provided a valuable opportunity to connect with fellow delegates, share experiences, and build relationships with union leaders from different regions.

3. Leadership Addresses and Panel Discussions

The second day began with presentations from Candace Rennick, CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer, and Yolanda McClean, CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer.

They spoke about the critical responsibilities of secretary-treasurers in ensuring financial transparency, maintaining accurate financial records, and supporting democratic decision-making within locals. Their remarks highlighted the importance of responsible financial stewardship, compliance with union policies, and ensuring members understand how union funds are managed.

A presentation on AROAP (Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan) was delivered by Juanita Forde, which focused on CUPE's ongoing efforts to address systemic racism and build inclusive workplaces within the union movement.

The morning continued with a panel discussion featuring experienced union officers who shared insights about the practical challenges faced by secretary-treasurers and trustees, such as maintaining proper documentation, financial reporting, and responding to members' financial inquiries.

4. Fraud Prevention and Financial Accountability

One of the most important sessions of the conference was the Fraud Prevention presentation by Mike Stevens.

This session focused on identifying risks related to financial mismanagement and implementing safeguards to prevent fraud within union locals.

Key topics in his presentation involved:

- Importance of regular financial audits and internal controls
- Proper documentation and approval processes for expenditures
- Segregation of financial responsibilities among officers
- Ensuring transparency in financial reporting

The session emphasized that strong governance and accountability practices are essential to protecting members' trust and ensuring responsible use of union resources.

5. Educational Workshop

I participated in the Workshop on Financial Essentials & Financial Officer for Treasurers. This hands-on workshop focused on learning about the basics of the local union's finances and budgeting.

These workshops focused on practical aspects of financial administration and governance, including:

- Duties regarding the finances of the union, budgeting and how to be transparent and accountable to members.
- Using CUPE ledger, manage local's funds, and accounts and preparing report to membership
- Responsibilities of trustees in reviewing union financial records
- Best practices for budget preparation and reporting
- Record-keeping and financial compliance requirements

These sessions provided hands-on guidance and allowed participants to ask questions about real challenges faced in managing union finances.

Additionally, discussions within the Retirees Network highlighted the continued role of retired members in supporting union initiatives and advocacy efforts.

6. Keynote Address: Housing Crisis in Ontario

A keynote presentation was delivered by Tanya Talaga, focusing on the housing crisis in Ontario. The talk touched upon the history of Canadian Indigenous people and how they have suffered and continue to suffer.

7. Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work

Another important session discussed the growing role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in workplaces. The presentation explored how AI and automation can impact workers through:

- Job displacement or restructuring
- Increased workplace surveillance
- Changes in skill requirements

The discussion emphasized the importance of unions proactively addressing technological change through bargaining and policy advocacy to protect workers' rights and ensure that technological advancements benefit workers rather than undermine them.

8. Additional Sessions

Other sessions during the conference included discussions on WSIB insurance obligations for locals, which highlighted the importance of ensuring that union members receive proper workplace injury protections and benefits.

There was also a presentation on union travel and administrative processes, which provided practical guidance on organizing union events and managing travel logistics.

9. Networking and Collaboration

In addition to formal sessions, the conference provided several opportunities for networking and collaboration. Engaging with members from different CUPE locals allowed for the exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices in managing union finances and supporting members effectively.

These interactions helped strengthen solidarity and provided valuable insights into how different locals approach financial governance and member engagement.

10. Conclusion

Attending the CUPE Ontario Secretary-Treasurer Conference 2026 was an extremely valuable experience. The conference provided practical knowledge on financial management, governance, and fraud prevention while also addressing broader social and economic issues affecting workers.

The sessions reinforced the importance of transparency, accountability, and responsible financial stewardship within union locals. The networking opportunities also helped build connections with other CUPE members and leaders across the province.

I am grateful to CUPE 3906 for supporting my participation in this conference and look forward to applying the knowledge and insights gained to contribute effectively to our local.

In Solidarity,

Shivam