



CBTU NEWSLETTER

COALITION OF BLACK TRADE UNIONISTS CANADIAN CHAPTER CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

We have a history of banding together as a people to fight against the injustices lived by Black and racialized workers. In 1972, the International Coalition of Black Trade Unionists was formed in part due to protests against our oppressed voices at the AFL-CIO in the United States. In the late 1980s however, a core group of anti-racism activists became instrumental in establishing an anti-racism organization in the Canadian labour movement called the Ontario Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (OCBTU).

The OCBTU founders originally sought to form an anti-racism coalition aimed at pooling resources and highlighting the particular struggles of Black, Chinese and South Asian trade-unionists', and pressure the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) and Canadian labour organizations to take concrete action to address racism. In the 1990s the OCBTU became primarily associated with trade unionists of African/Black heritage. In 1992, this group became known in labour history for its creation of a "report card" on racial representation in unions at the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) convention.

In 1995, the same year the Ontario Conservative Party eliminated the Employment Equity Act bill, the OCBTU joined the CBTU to become the first international Chapter of the organization, which helped provide an international lens and solidarity for the plight of Black and racialized workers in Ontario. As stated by Bev Johnson, former President of the Chapter, "We are the conscience of the labour movement. Our objectives are to make sure that issues of Black unionists stay on the table and get addressed; to empower ourselves to move into leadership and provide support for them; to educate members to get them to join us".

In 2008, members from other provinces began to join as well. After 30 years, we now boast hundreds of members across Canada.

Happy 30th anniversary CBTU Canada!

JOIN US!

General Membership Meeting & Celebration

DATE: DECEMBER 16

START TIME: 6:00PM

ADDRESS:

80 Commerce Valley
Drive East, Suite 1
Markham, ON L3T 0B2

**We will be serving a
light meal and
beverages during the
meeting.**

**We look forward
to seeing you
there!**

CBTU Tribute to Brother Larry Rousseau



Our Chapter proudly celebrates Brother Larry Rousseau, a long-time friend, mentor, and pillar of our community, as he prepares to retire at the end of his term as Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) in May 2026.

First elected in May 2017 and re-elected in May 2023, Larry has brought his trademark passion, clarity, and courage to the CLC Executive. His leadership has always been grounded in a lifetime of activism—championing labour rights, health and safety, human rights, equity, and justice. His deep involvement in the 2SLGBTQIA+, anti-racism, and peace movements reflects not only his principles but the heart he brings to every space he enters.

During his time at the CLC, Larry helped drive major wins that will benefit workers for generations—protecting pensions, expanding child care, advancing pharmacare, securing 10 days of paid sick leave for federal workers, and pushing forward the Sustainable Jobs Act and meaningful climate action.

Before joining the CLC, Larry served as the National Capital Regional Executive Vice-President of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) and as a Regional Vice-President with the Union of National Employees (UNE).

But to the CBTU, Larry is not just a national labour leader: he is family.

For decades, he has been a dedicated volunteer, organizer, and advocate within the CBTU, always carving out time to uplift Black workers. Larry has:

- Participated in countless CBTU gatherings, strategy meetings, and community events
- Hosted the CBTU Black Workers' Dialogue and numerous workshops
- Mentored new activists and supported members in moments of personal and workplace struggle
- Represented the CBTU Canadian Chapter at the International CBTU Convention, speaking powerfully on the role of politics in advancing Black workers' rights
- Raised our issues in national forums, interviews, and media appearances, ensuring Black voices were heard, clearly and unapologetically

His 2020 Our Times article, “The Time Has Come,” remains a landmark reflection on anti-Black racism, intersectionality, policing, labour activism, and the urgent need for systemic change. It stands as one of many examples of his commitment to speaking truth, educating others, and pushing our movement forward.

Larry's generosity, spirit, and unwavering integrity have strengthened the CBTU and inspired every one of us. We are deeply grateful for his years of volunteerism, leadership, and love for our community.

Congratulations, Larry, on a well-earned retirement. Oh and Larry... since you'll *finally* have some free time... don't be surprised when we start calling on you even more. After all, retirement just means you're now officially available for *extra* CBTU duty!

Written by Isabelle Miller

CBTU Appreciation for Sister Jackie Taylor



The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) extends our deepest gratitude to Sister Jackie Taylor for her dedicated service and outstanding leadership in the labour movement. As she concludes her term as Executive Vice-President of the Ontario Federation of Labour, we honour her decades of commitment to workers' rights, equity, and community empowerment.

Jackie began her CBTU journey as an activist with COPE, advocating for fair treatment and strong representation for her fellow members. She later served as Labour Liaison Program Services Manager with United Way Greater Toronto from 2016 to 2024, where she built important connections between unions, workers and the communities they support. As a proud member of the United Steelworkers, she has continued to lead through education, bargaining support, women's advocacy and grassroots organising across Ontario and Atlantic Canada.

Throughout every stage of her career, Jackie has remained an active and cherished member of the CBTU family. She has joined us at meetings, events and conventions with warmth, enthusiasm and a heartfelt commitment to lifting up Black workers, always bringing encouragement and community wherever she goes.

CBTU thanks Jackie for her unwavering commitment and celebrates the tremendous impact she has made and will continue to make in our movement.

Written by Isabelle Miller

Matthew Green: A Voice of the People

CBTU member Matthew Green (former NDP MP for Hamilton Centre, and current Political and Communications Specialist at Amalgamated Transit Union) has consistently given voice to the Black community and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists through electoral politics.

Most recently Matthew addressed the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Human Rights Summit as well as the OFL Black and Racialized workers conference where he called out the Carney Liberal government: *"The most recent federal budget attacked public services and clearly revealed that we have two conservative parties. We need to advocate politically to improve the material conditions of working-class people. We can't have a democratic political system without a democratic economic system and we can't have a democratic economic system without democratic workplaces. I may have lost my job as MP for Hamilton Centre but I have not lost my way. We must continue to stand together to fight for public services, fair wages and the power of the working class."*

Born and raised in Hamilton, Green was elected as the first Black Canadian to serve on the Hamilton City Council from 2014 to 2018. Green was the second Black Canadian to represent Hamilton in Parliament as a member of the New Democratic Party (NDP). As the NDP's Labour Critic, Green was a tireless champion for stronger collective bargaining rights, a ban on scab labour and justice for workers for workers.

Written by Chris Wilson



CBTU Members Shine at the OFL Convention

The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) is thrilled to celebrate the accomplishments of our members at this year's Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Convention. Their dedication, leadership, and commitment to the labour movement continue to inspire all of us.



(from left to right: Ahmad Gaied, Mark Brown, Juanita Forde)

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Ahmad Gaied on his re-election as Secretary Treasurer of the OFL. Ahmad has made history as the youngest officer ever elected to the OFL and has been a tireless advocate for workers, equity, and community engagement. His journey from chief steward at his No Frills store to a leading voice for young workers and equity-seeking communities demonstrates the impact of dedication and vision.

We also celebrate Mark Brown and Juanita Forde on their elections as OFL Equity Vice-Presidents Representing Black and Racialized Workers, and Rosemarie Hall on her election as OFL Alternate Equity Vice-President Representing Black and Racialized Workers. Each has been an active and inspiring member of CBTU. Mark is an award-winning human rights activist, a published writer, and a trailblazer within CUPW. Juanita, currently our Chapter's First Vice-President and a former CBTU Rising Star award recipient, brings strong leadership through her work with CUPE Ontario. Rosemarie continues to advance equity within OPSEU as the Region 2 Representative for the Coalition of Racialized Workers. Their elections ensure that the perspectives and leadership of Black and racialized workers continue to shape the work of the OFL.



Rosemarie Hall



Frank Saptel

We are also proud to congratulate Frank Saptel, who received the 2025 OFL Cultural Award. A long-time CBTU member, Frank has been instrumental in supporting our Chapter through website management in our early years, to workshop facilitation at conventions, to ongoing volunteer work. His commitment to culture, education, and community has had a lasting impact.

We are so proud of Ahmad, Mark, Juanita, Rosemarie, and Frank. Their achievements highlight the leadership, dedication, and passion CBTU members bring to the labour movement. We look forward to their continued support and to all the ways they will continue to make a difference in our communities and our unions.

Written by Isabelle Miller

The History of Human Rights in Canada: A CBTU Education Department Initiative

Human Rights in Canada Labour Education Workshop

The History of Human Rights in Canada

Using relatable examples of human rights gains in Canada, we will explore the history of human rights and how to combat violations of our human rights in the workplace. We will review the required elements of a human rights complaint and discuss remedies to improve conditions in our workplaces and unions.

Saturday, February 7th, 2026
CUPE Ontario Office
80 Commerce Valley Drive East, Suite 1
Markham, Ontario

Partner Organizations & Sponsors



ACLA



CUPE-SCFP



The CBTU Education Department will soon be opening registration for a maximum of 25 participants to join us in a 3-hour course on the History of Human Rights in Canada.

Date: Saturday, February 7th, 2026

Title: Human Rights in Canada Labour Education Workshop

Facilitator: Denise Hampden, CBTU Education Director,

Event Organizer: Christopher Wilson

Location: CUPE Ontario Office 80 Commerce Valley Drive, East, Suite 1 Markham

Times: 8:45am - 1:30pm

Agenda:

8:45am - 9:30 am Breakfast

9:30am - 11:00am Workshop

11:00am - 11:15am Break

11:15am - 12:30 pm Workshop

12:30pm - 1:00pm Lunch

1:00pm - 1:30pm Human Rights Award

Each participant will receive a \$100 expense per diem, or alternatively, may choose to donate the per diem to either the *Kids in the Woods Initiative* or the *Asian Canadian Labour Alliance*.

A special thank you to our partner organizations, ACLA and CUPE, and to our funding partner Union Savings, for their contributions towards holding this course. Registration information shall be made available on CBTU.ca. Submitted by Chris Wilson

A Tradition of Care: Ivan Dawns' Christmas Dinners

Another year has come around, and Ivan Dawns will once again be hosting his annual Christmas dinner for the Back Door Mission shelter in Oshawa. This long-standing tradition reflects Ivan's deep commitment to community care and continues to make a meaningful difference for those in need.



We are also pleased to share that Ivan is expanding his efforts this year by organizing a special Christmas dinner at the Columbus Night Seniors Building. This gathering is intended for seniors who may not have family to spend the holidays with. Ivan's goal is to offer a warm meal, a welcoming atmosphere and the comfort of shared company during the holiday season.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Ivan for his continued dedication, compassion and leadership in our community. His generosity brings people together and reminds us of the true spirit of the season.

Written by Juanita Forde





Chapter President's Closing Remarks

As we celebrate 30 years of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, I want to express my deepest gratitude to every member who has stood with us through decades of advocacy, solidarity and community building. It is because of your dedication that CBTU has remained a strong voice for workers, equity, and opportunity across generations.

A special thank you goes to our generous sponsors — your support of our golf tournament, children's scholarship program, and free summer camp has made a real difference. Because of you, young people have access to safe summer spaces, educational opportunities, and hope for a brighter future. Your commitment demonstrates what it means to invest in our youth and invest in our community.

As we look ahead, your continued support ensures that CBTU can keep living our values — justice, empowerment, unity, and opportunity. With your partnership, we will keep building programs that uplift children, strengthen families, and honor the labour and dignity of Black workers everywhere.

Thank you, once again, for 30 years of solidarity — and for believing in this mission.

In unity and strength,

Yolanda McClean
President, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

TO ALL OUR FAMILIES & FRIENDS, SEASON'S GREETINGS

CBTU Canada Chapter Executive: President Yolanda McClean, 1st Vice President Juanita Forde, 2nd Vice President Lineisha Bernard, Treasurer Christine Maclin, Recording Secretary Coleen Houlder, Communications Secretary Isabelle Miller, Communications & Social Media Officer Mark Brown, Membership Secretary Chris Campbell, Member At Large Mark Austin, Under 40 Representative Jordan Forde, Trustee Dennis Williams, Trustee Sharon Paris, Retiree Member Representative Andrea McCormack

CBTU ONTARIO CANADA CHAPTER

c/o Yolanda McClean
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Markham, ON L3T 0B2

TO RENEW YOUR CBTU CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP, PLEASE VISIT WWW.CBTU.CA/JOIN