

October 8, 2019

CUPE
EDUCATION
WORKERS

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**BARGAINING
UPDATE
2019
Bulletin # 14**

**To: Local Presidents and Executives, Bargaining Committees and Membership
*** Please share with CUPE local members only *****

As you know, your central bargaining team reached a tentative agreement late Sunday evening. It's a deal that we will be proud to recommend to leaders and to members.

Your hard work around mobilization, strike preparation, and building community links were key in reaching a deal and achieving what are real gains and an overall real win for CUPE education workers.

Usually, it's CUPE's practice to keep details of any tentative agreement out of the public eye until CUPE members have had the chance to review them before they vote on the contract.

But this time, details of the deal started appearing in the media the day after the tentative agreement was reached; we have it on good authority that the provincial government leaked that information. We can only speculate as to why it did that, but one of the consequences has been to cause division and speculation among the membership.

So OSBCU is breaking with tradition and setting out here specifics of the deal here:

Jobs and services: This was identified as CUPE members' Number 1 bargaining priority. We got up to \$78 million **annually** to create and protect up to 1300 CUPE jobs, and the services our members provide. This funding is for the life of the contract (through 2022) and retroactive to before the layoff period.

The wins:

- **Local Priorities Fund: \$58 million a year**, which is CUPE's share of the Local Priorities Fund, which was cut by the Ford government in the spring of this year. This funding protects roughly 1000 CUPE members' jobs.
- **\$20 million a year** in funding will bring back the jobs and hours lost when the contract expired and when the Ford government made other cuts to funding. It ensures about 300 full-time equivalent jobs that were lost will be brought back and it will be one of our building blocks for the next round of bargaining.

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Other unions can now negotiate to restore their portion of the LPF funding that would protect the services their members provide -- another of the many ways that CUPE shows leadership and solidarity among unions in the education sector.

Wages: 1% in each year of the three years and a "me-too" clause on wages.

The win: The government has already tabled wage-restraint legislation that restricts public sector wage increases to 1%, but the me-too clause means if any other group of unionized workers in the public education sector negotiates a higher wage increase, we will automatically get that too.

Benefits: 1% increase in each year of the three years. We were able to secure the financial health of the Education Workers Benefits Trusts and push back on the reconciliation process for another three years.

The win: The government wanted to claw back our plan's surplus. We fought back on that and now the trust will be in a position to make benefit improvements very soon.

Sick leave: NO CHANGES to our sick leave plan.

The win: We have a good plan and it became a target for the government and school boards. But we pushed every sick leave concession off the table, despite being told for months that the Council of Trustees' Associations (CTA) was not going to agree to deal without it.

Sick leave notes: We agreed on a medical note that will be used across the province and that will put an end to employer's overreaching demands for unnecessary medical information.

The win: Different boards had different requirements for sick notes from members, and some requirements were intrusive and invasive. The new documentation form specifically says that functional ability information need only be provided when an employee is returning to work and requires accommodation. This will provide consistency across the province, streamline the process, and protect workers' privacy.

Premiums/Allowances: 1% in each year of the three years.

The win: We haven't seen an increase to these amounts since the 2008-2012 agreement. We can now ensure that they will be increased as we go forward.

Holidays: Family Day will be included in all collective agreements as a statutory holiday.

The win: Until now, some CUPE education workers, like our custodians, have had to work on Family Day. Under this contract, they'll be able to spend this holiday at home with their families.

Community use of schools: \$ 600,000 will retain hundreds of members' jobs (numbers to be confirmed).

The win: School boards must use CUPE workers to keep schools open outside of class hours.

Violence in the workplace: We secured a half-day training for all CUPE education workers.

The win: Workplace violence is a problem that our employers have always refused to acknowledge. This training forces boards to recognize the problem and will position us to build on the results so we keep students and workers safe.

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Mergers and Amalgamations: The CTA must meet with OSBCU within 30 days after any notice regarding merger/amalgamation of school board to discuss redeployment strategies.

The win: There is a Minister's Task Force on school board mergers. This part of the agreement will allow us to prepare to protect members' jobs in the event of board amalgamations.

What's next

Under OSBCU bylaws, a deal also has to be endorsed by locals at a leadership meeting before it can be presented to members. If leaders endorse the deal, locals will hold ratification votes for members to vote on it.

We expect to hold this leadership meeting on Saturday, 12 October, to interfere as little as possible with the Thanksgiving weekend. Local ratification votes will all take place before the end of the month.

Make no mistake: if ratified, this contract would be a win for our members. It has achieved some important breakthroughs and gives us a good foundation to improve in other areas in future negotiations.

We have also been in contact with our allies in the teacher's unions – they recognize the heavy lifting that was performed by CUPE and its members and are committed to taking on the fight for us as well. We must continue to mobilize around these education workers and other ally groups. The support they provided enhanced the mobilization by you, our members and helped us push back government and employer demands.

Finally, please don't let rumours and speculation cloud the big picture: this deal has significant wins for CUPE education workers. If you have questions, your local leaders and your CUPE National staff representative will be happy to help, while OSBCU commits to keeping leaders and members informed.

In Solidarity,



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