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MEMBERS'
BULLETIN
June 2020

OSBCU diary

June-July: Classification Reference Group meetings on health and safety return-to-work protocols

June 19: Ministry of Education releases Grants for Student Needs for 2020-21 and School Safety Plan for school reopening in 2020-21

August: Area and Francophone meetings and webinars held with local executive members via Zoom

Wednesdays: OSBCU President Laura Walton's Facebook Live events; you can check out past events on facebook.com/osbcucscso

Thursdays: conference calls with Ministry of Education

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Dear CUPE education workers:

At the end of this strangest of school years, we find ourselves not winding down for the summer, but instead gearing up on several fronts.

It turns out that sending students home was the easy part of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Reopening our schools will be a lot trickier.

The next stages will be challenging, as we prepare for the following:

- fighting off any attempts by boards to reduce services and staffing and using the job protection language in our central agreement
- making sure that CUPE school board workers return to work safely in the fall
- preparing for what the new school year will look like: additional safety measures, professional development, online and remote learning, in-class distancing and cohorting

So many of our members have worked valiantly to maintain our schools and support our students.

Your OSBCU representatives will do all we can in the weeks and months ahead to make sure that schools can re-open safely in the fall and that students and staff have the best possible services when classes begin again.

We wish everyone a good summer and a safe and healthy return to class in September.

In solidarity,



Laura Walton, OSBCU President

OSBCU online

OSBCU has met the challenges posed by the COVID-19 lockdown by going online. Whether via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Facebook Live, conference call or telephone town hall, we've kept the lines of communication open among OSBCU, local presidents and local members.

We recently completed a series of area meetings with local presidents and executives, along with a PowerPoint presentation on using central job-security language to fight layoffs (see section "Area meetings," below). We will also be holding online meetings with members of the classification reference groups to get feedback on health and safety return-to-work protocols.

Out of the information gained in those online meetings, OSBCU/CUPE will produce guidance documents to support locals in conversations around reopening including health and safety and staffing needs.

A webinar on the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) is being prepared with information broken down to funding levels of individual boards, which will be shared with school board leaders at a later date.

School re-opening plans

Ontario Minister of Education Stephen Lecce finally released the government's plans to re-open schools in Ontario. The government has based them on BC's and Quebec's models for opening schools again for learning and released "guidance notes" rather than directives to boards, encouraging them to work with unions on plans for reopening.

Provincial standards: In OSBCU/CUPE's view, the Ministry had the opportunity to lead on school re-openings, but instead ceded final responsibility to the school boards. We have called for province-wide standards, accompanied by adequate funding, to ensure that schools can be kept safe and healthy places to learn and work.

CUPE has stressed that only province-wide standards, to ensure that every school will be cleaned in the same way and to the same standard, will instill public confidence that schools will be safe for students and staff. For example, it should no longer be the practice for schools to have some areas cleaned only every other day, as we saw last year when there were reductions in funding.

Ministry guidance notes to school boards: The guidance notes call for school boards to develop plans for

- continuation of online and remote learning.
- adapted delivery model characterized by distancing and cohorting, with no more than 15 students in the classroom plus teaching and support staff. This model will likely mean alternate days or weeks of students in class.
- return to classroom learning with enhanced protocols for health and safety

Health and safety protocols have been developed with the Ministry of Labour. School boards are asked to work with unions to develop health and safety plans by the end of July and local boards of health will review these plans by early August. Boards of health will offer the final

advice on the conditions under which schools will reopen and the plans will be re-evaluated at the end of September.

Among the issues that CUPE has raised are

- child care implications for families and workers with children
- the need for early registration in schools and the need to avoid walk-ins
- assigning schedules by family groupings
- protocols for student or staff members who test positive for COVID-19
- robust and resilient systems for contact tracing

PPE: Boards will see that there are adequate supplies of PPE, especially for workers working with special-needs students.

Provincial Working Group for Health & Safety (PWGHS): The Ministry of Education has invited CUPE and other unions to reconvene the PWGHS to learn from “the best advice from the sector on the most appropriate measures to facilitate a safe return to school in the fall for students and staff.”

This committee was formed in our 2014 round of bargaining and was renegotiated in the latest round. OSBCU Executive members Michele Lalonge-Davey and Mike Saliba are supported by CUPE National Staff Paul Sylvestre, on this committee.

School reopening Q&A

Does the cohort of 15 include adults?

No. Up to 15 students and one or two adults.

Since 16 or more children in kindergarten triggers the need for a DECE in the class, will the limit on 15 students per class mean that DECEs could be laid off?

No. The Ministry has said that classes will be set up normally so as to provide as seamless a transition as possible back to conventional learning. This will mean that DECEs will be assigned to classes as per status quo.

What will be done to minimize the rotation of EAs?

The guidance to boards is, to the extent that it is possible, to try to keep same adults with same group of children, but the government has not confirmed that EAs will remain with one class.

Will clerical staff be brought back early for early registration?

The Ministry has suggested that enrolment should be complete by mid-August. OSBCU/CUPE has pointed out that enrolment is typically the work of our clerical staff and that these workers should be brought back early to complete it. The Ministry has indicated that this will be a board decision.

Will there more custodial support to maintain cleaning protocols?

OSBCU/CUPE has been urging for a provincial standard for school cleaning. We have also highlighted the need the increased funding for increased funding supports. The Ministry has noted our concerns.

Will the Ministry give additional funding to board for increased purchase of supplies and cleaning, as did in H1N1?

The Ministry said it is looking into whether to make these purchases centrally.

Redeployment update

The Ministry of Education has shared with us it has had over 800 workers from the broader public sector (not just school board workers) who have volunteered for redeployment, mainly to the long-term sectors.

Over 500 volunteers have been approved by school boards (not all CUPE members, of course) and they are mainly drawn from custodians, EAs, and people with health care experience. About 90 per cent of volunteers from school boards – mainly teachers and EAs – were approved for redeployment; those that were denied by school board employers were deemed to be needed for the Ministry's continuity of learning initiative.

Area meetings and presentations on job security

Thanks to the local leaders who took part in OSBCU's series of area meetings, held via Zoom in May and June. This participation gave us a clear snapshot of the strengths and opportunities that exist in our regions around staffing, which locals have concluded local agreements, and levels of political engagement.

We also attached to these area meetings French- and English-language webinars to help locals use the job security provisions of the central agreement to fight any attempts to reduce protected complements.

The webinars covered the jobs security language of Letter of Understanding #3; establishing protected complement (based on Full-Time Equivalents (FTE); negotiated funding for jobs (Local Priorities Fund and Education Workers Protection Fund); legitimate grounds for reducing complement; and fighting back against cuts to the FTE.

Thanks to CUPE researcher Dan Crow for preparing the presentation and to OSBCU exec members Liz Harrison, Mike Galipeau, Alex Groulx and Christine Couture for presenting it.

GSN overview

The Grants for Student Needs (GSN) were released over two months later than we would normally expect them. The government also released them on the same day as it announced its plans for school reopening.

With its 3 per cent increase to the GSN, the government is calling it a “historic” investment in education. We would call it “status quo,” since the increase just reflects financial commitments made in collective bargaining, enrolment growth and inflation. There is \$25 million allocated for some COVID-19 related needs.

It is OSBCU/CUPE’s position that there is still not enough in the 2020-21 GSN to do everything that’s needed to provide adequate services for students and to keep them and staff safe and healthy in post-pandemic schools.

OSBCU/CUPE submission to Ontario's Framework for Continued Learning

OSBCU submitted a 12-page document with recommendations for creating plans for allowing students and/or parents to enter schools to retrieve their belongings, operating in summer, and returning to school in September. The submission was covered in the [Ottawa Citizen](#) in the story “Schools will need more staff, from custodians to social workers, says education union.”

The submission included classification-specific recommendations along with the following general recommendations:

- Open all closed classrooms and other spaces in schools for learning and ensure there is enough staff to provide proper cleaning
- Provide all necessary PPE to staff
- Regular consultation between school boards and local union health and safety representatives
- Boards, in collaboration with local unions, should develop access protocols for all visitors, including screening for infection, restricting access to a safe number of visitors consistent with social distancing protocols.
- Ensure staffing levels are sufficient to fully implement health and safety protocols
- Boards, in collaboration with local unions, should develop protocols for dealing with exposure to COVID-19 in schools.

CERB

The Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was integrated with Employment Insurance to allow workers to apply for benefits through a single window.

Originally announced as a 16-week program, the CERB has now been extended by eight weeks and will be available until October 3, 2020. However, the federal government is signaling that the CERB will not be extended past that date. Or, if there is an extension, we expect there will be pressure to modify CERB to force people into minimum wage work.

Ministry/education workers' COVID-19 Response Working Groups

The Ministry-led groups have been providing information and feedback to the Ministry of Education. Initially, discussions were around the continuation of learning, but now these discussions have switched focus, particularly to health and safety concerns and considerations around school reopening. These conversations will continue into the summer.

The OSBCU representatives on these groups: Custodial/Caretaker (OSBCU Area 6 VP Mike Galipeau and Francophone Mobilization Officer Alex Groulx); Learning Resources (OSBCU Area 1 VP Dave Geroux and Area 4 VP Nora Shaughnessy); and Instructional Support (OSBCU Area 2 VP Keith Levere and Area 5 VP Liz Harrison).

Save the Date

The 2021 OSBCU Convention has been booked for March 22 to 27 in Windsor, Ontario. A formal call will be sent as required by OSBCU bylaws.

Please note that once again there will be a presentation by the benefit trust on the first day of convention, prior to the opening of convention.

CUPE long-term care campaign: please share!

CUPE National has launched a campaign to fix Canada's broken long-term care system by making it a part of our public universal health care system.

The campaign is in its first phase and we are asking CUPE school board members to take action by visiting fixlongtermcare.ca and amplifying the campaign among your networks. CUPE is working on Phase 2 of the campaign with stories and a strategy to reach Canada's decision makers, so please stay tuned.



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