



# TOGETHER, EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

OSBCC Mobilization Update 2012

Issue 7

September 28, 2012

Sisters and Brothers:

On Sunday, September 23, over 320 CUPE school board education workers came together for a Leadership Meeting in Toronto. Delegates from across the province filled the hall and were united in their commitment to defend public education and free collective bargaining. The focus of the meeting was to update the membership following the passage of Bill 115 – the *Putting Students First Act* – and to discuss ways to move forward and fight back.

Bill 115 seeks to remove the right to free collective bargaining for all education workers in Ontario by imposing a settlement that was reached between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA) and the government.

The meeting began at 10 a.m. sharp with introductions and a welcome from OSBCC Chair Terri Preston. For the first part of the morning, Terri updated the delegates on what has happened since the June 9<sup>th</sup> Leadership Meeting to get us to where we are today. She then spent some time explaining the OECTA settlement and why it does not work for CUPE education support workers.



OSBCC Coordinator Brian Blakeley followed by introducing CUPE's legal staff, Elizabeth Nurse and Gavin Leeb, who were tasked with explaining the impact of Bill 115 on our members as well as CUPE's role in the constitutional challenge. It is clear that Bill 115 is an unprecedented attack on workers' rights and that CUPE is challenging the legislation with every resource available.

Up next delegates heard from CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn, who spoke about the government's broader agenda and why we need to fight back. He reminded us that we will need the strength of the entire membership to stand strong against this bully legislation. "This law is one of the most unjust, unfair and unreasonable pieces of legislation we've ever seen. It's why we must be clear in consciously choosing to stand up to the bully and keep standing until they back down.

To do that, we need to talk directly with every CUPE school board member in Ontario. They are our greatest resource, our most powerful weapon. We may have been unable to control Dalton McGuinty, Tim Hudak and their passage of Bill 115 – but we can control how we stand up and fight back!”

After lunch, CUPE National President Paul Moist addressed the leaders: “Collective bargaining and defending workers’ rights is the reason unions exist, said Moist. Bill 115 seeks to dictate a predetermined result and we will never accept that. Our members are our strength. We will not be silenced, we will not put our heads down and we will stand up and fight for our collective rights.”

He stated that this is an important time for our union and committed the resources of CUPE National to support us in this fight.

An action plan was presented to delegates which contained three sections: a bargaining strategy, the local unions’ role in the legal challenge and mobilization of the membership. A resolution was debated and passed in support of that action plan.

At adjournment, energy was high with members eager to get back to their communities and take action to defend public education and free collective bargaining. Putting students first is a priority for this membership and our sector is ready to fight back. From informing and educating members and communities to lobbying elected officials to participating in events, locals will engage members in the workplace, in their communities and in provincial strategies to protect good jobs, public services and bargaining rights.

Members are invited to contact their area OSBCC Bargaining Support Representative to share creative mobilization initiatives that are underway in their region. Please visit [cupe.on.ca/supportededucation](http://cupe.on.ca/supportededucation) for more information on Bill 115 and to find out how you can get involved in defending public education and free collective bargaining.

We count on you to maintain clear and consistent messaging to our members. Please distribute our Bargaining and Mobilization Updates to your members and post them at your workplace as soon as they are received. Information is power and a well-informed membership is the key to our success at the bargaining table.

In solidarity,

Your Ontario School Board Coordinating Committee