

Enormous effort leads to school board workers' historic agreement

School board workers have reached an historic agreement with representatives from all Ontario school boards, thanks to an enormous effort by bargaining units, staff reps, Provincial Discussion Table (PDT) specialists and union leadership.

Through a coordinated bargaining effort, over 50,000 CUPE school board workers will see a wage increase of 3.0 per cent every year for the next four years. Gains have also been made with regards to benefit plans, working hours and staffing levels. Only one collective agreement remains outstanding and that is a newly organized bargaining unit who is employed by a school authority. The employer in that case asked for and was granted a short extension by the provincial government to conclude a first collective agreement.

"The fact that one hundred and six bargaining units were able to ratify a new collective agreement by the November 30th deadline is a testament to the hard work that so many people put into completing this bargaining process," said Terri Preston, Chair of the CUPE Ontario School Board Coordinating Committee (OSBCC). "It's a proud occasion and an important achievement, particularly given the state of the current economy."

Preston paid tribute to all the leaders of the locals, their servicing staff and area reps on the OSBCC, as well as with the special "flying squad" of PDT specialists who pulled out all stops to complete the bargaining process. "There will be time to evaluate the process and make recommendations for the future, for now let's celebrate our first effort at bargaining together and the results we have been able to achieve."

CUPE Ontario President Sid Ryan said that the win is a result of years of political action directed at the Minister of Education and school boards by CUPE Ontario locals and members.

"For years, school board workers have consistently made the point that support workers are a key contributor to the quality of education and safe clean schools for our kids," said Ryan. All of those efforts led to the creation of the Provincial Discussion Table.

"This is a prime example of what we can achieve when an entire sector, and the leaders and staff who serve them, come together with coordinated action," added Ryan. "This is a model that we hope to emulate to make similar gains in other sectors."

“There are so many people to thank for all their contributions in making this happen. This victory goes back to the days when Charlotte Monardo was OSBCC chair and Karen McNama was coordinator. Those roles got carried on by Frank Ventresca and Betty Sommers respectively, and up through to today, with Terri Preston and Brian Blakeley,” added Ryan. “Overall, it’s an amazing achievement for the school board sector and our union.”

Information: Contact your local CUPE executive, check out the CUPE Ontario website <http://www.cupe.on.ca/>, or join the CUPE school boards Listserv. If you wish to receive this newsletter by fax please send your fax number.

In solidarity,

Your bargaining committee:

Terri Preston	OSBCC Chair
Susan Hanson	OSBCC
Marc Boisvert	OSBCC
Frank Ventresca	OSBCC
John Weatherup	Local 4400
Sid Ryan	CUPE Ontario president
Antoni Shelton	CUPE Ontario Division
Linda Thurston-Neeley	CUPE Assistant Director
Brian Atkinson	CUPE Acting Director
André Lamoureux	CUPE Assistant Director
Brian Blakeley	CUPE School Boards Coordinator
Jean-Marc Bezaire	French Language Boards Coordinator
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