

The OSBCC bargaining team is now getting ready for the next meeting with the employer representatives and the Ministry of Education, scheduled for Thursday April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## The Ontario budget

On Tuesday March 25<sup>th</sup>, the Government of Ontario presented its 2008 provincial budget. The emphasis was put on skills training, in an attempt to stimulate a slowing economy.

We focused on the announcements regarding education and CUPE workers in the school system. Among the numerous measures announced that day, some will obviously influence the outcome of upcoming PDT discussions:

- The province's education budget, called Grants for Student Needs, totals \$18.8 billion, up \$315 million from last year.
- Special education, English as a second language and First Nations programs are among the specific areas that received a financial boost.
- \$57.3 million will be dedicated for special education. Meanwhile, the amount is not intended to directly address staffing issues but to cover specific expenses such as: funding for High Needs Amounts, increased number of students getting SIP support, custody and correctional facilities, and growth in the Special Equipment Amount.

An important fact is that the announced increase (\$315 millions) in the education budget is not intended to cover settlements with support staff and teachers, planned to occur later this year. We also expect that there will be further announcements and that the full picture will emerge only when all education staff have settled their collective agreements.

## A first Conference call held on March 19<sup>th</sup>

A Broadcast conference call was held on Wednesday March 19<sup>th</sup>. Sid Ryan, President of the Ontario Division, addressed the local leadership with updates on the PDT process.

Brother Brian Blakeley and André Lamoureux also gave some details as of how the discussions are going.

Among other subjects, the nine initial proposals tabled by the CUPE team were discussed. These proposals have been forwarded to local presidents and will be the starting point of further negotiations.

## Upcoming events

The next PDT meeting between the three parties is scheduled for Thursday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>. We expect to receive answers from the employer representatives on some of the issues that we tabled. This meeting will certainly be a good indicator of how negotiations will evolve in the near future. We will keep you posted regularly with the outcome of the discussions.

The OSBCC conference is coming to London from April 8 to 12. This will be the occasion for CUPE members to get more information on the PDT discussions and to get actively involved in the process.

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:

Frank Ventresca	OSBCC Chair
Susan Hanson	OSBCC
Marc Boisvert	OSBCC
John Weatherup	CUPE Local 4400
Linda Thurston-Neeley	CUPE Assistant Director
Brian Atkinson	CUPE Assistant Director
André Lamoureux	CUPE Assistant Director
Brian Blakeley	CUPE School Boards Coordinator
Paul O'Donnell	CUPE Research
Elizabeth Nurse	CUPE Legal
Luc Tittley	CUPE Communications
Antoni Shelton	CUPE Ontario Division

cope491/nz

TEL 416.292.3999 FAX 416.292.2839 EMAIL [gr8in08@cupe.ca](mailto:gr8in08@cupe.ca) [www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca)