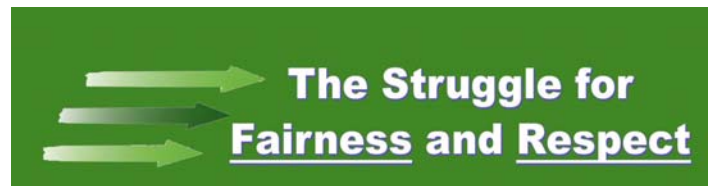


Access to the Strike Fund for Strike-averting Campaigns



The 1999 National Convention

Until 2001, CUPE 's National Defense Fund was used to fund political campaigns and to fund strike- averting campaigns and to pay strike pay.

As pressure strike activity escalated during the 1990's, the National Defense Fund was emptied, CUPE was unable to pay strike pay and the 1999 national convention voted special assessments for strike pay and benefits.

At the 1999 convention, members without the legal right to strike were assured by the national officers that they could continue to access funds for strike averting campaigns for political strikes, outside of collective bargaining. Ontario healthcare workers were then in the fourth year of a battle against the Harris government's attempt to strip their collective agreements.

The 2001 National Convention

The 2001 national convention created a national strike fund. The National Executive Board then wrote regulations for the Strike Fund. The National Strike Fund regulations stopped access to funds for strike averting campaigns for strikes outside of collective bargaining.

Strike-averting Campaigns

The Strike Fund pays strike pay and benefits after 10 days on the picket line. Regardless of whether a strike is illegal or legal, strike pay and benefits are payable after 10 days. Most illegal strikes last less than 10 days before the labour board orders workers back to work and the courts move in.

Campaigns to apply pressure through advertising and mobilization to avert strikes are eligible for strike averting funding, provided that the local is in bargaining, has passed through conciliation and has taken a strike vote.

Until 2001 workers threatened by government legislation received support for strike averting campaigns. Not any longer.

Bill 36, 2005

In 2005, Ontario hospital workers moved into strike position to prevent the provincial Liberal government from using the power that they taken in Bill 36 to order hospitals to transfer their non-clinical services to private providers.

These members applied for a strike averting campaign to do advertising in advance of a potential strike. Not being in collective bargaining, this request for strike averting funding was denied.

Political Strikes Should Be Supported

Strike averting campaigns are funded at 100%. Defense Fund campaigns are funded at 50%.

The impact of restricting strike- averting campaigns to strikes related to collective bargaining is to reduce the resources available to fight legislation that threatens our contracts.

Legislation can pose a fundamental threat to our membership.

The Harris government threatened to take away the right to strike from public sector workers and to corrupt interest arbitration for those without the legal right to strike. CUPE members moved to illegal strike position across Ontario. Harris backed away from his attack on the right to strike but healthcare workers continued in illegal strike position for three years until the province stopped its attempt to undermine the arbitration process. These mobilizations were supported as strike averting campaigns under the national strike fund.

This support is no longer available.

Strong collective agreements are built over decades. We must be able to defend those agreements from legislation. Any one of our sectors, any group of our members can be threatened.

We need a national strike fund that can help defend our membership against this increasingly dangerous reality.

Is there a way to resolve this?

Ontario's representatives on the national executive board (neb) had come close to working out a compromise proposal with the national secretary treasurer, but that compromise wasn't accepted by the neb as a whole.

The compromise involved setting aside 10% of the assets of the national strike fund for political strikes. Under this proposal no campaign to avert a political strike could use up more than 20% of this amount. Hopefully ongoing negotiations will resolve this impasse.

