

CUPE  
EDUCATION  
WORKERS

# MAKING SCHOOLS WORK



**June 2018**

**Members' bulletin**

## **The new OSBCU: making history, making a difference**

In March, we held the inaugural convention of the Ontario School Board Council of Unions; we are now a recognized bargaining structure under the CUPE Constitution.

As the OSBCC, we represented CUPE members at provincial discussion tables, in central bargaining, in the fight against Bill 115, and in the work-to-rule campaign in 2015.

Now the OSBCU is the recognized bargaining agent for CUPE education workers under the *School Board Collective Bargaining Act*. We face many challenges over the coming year and beyond, including an uncertain political environment. But our new structure puts us in a strong position to negotiate the best possible deal for our members at a central table and support local bargaining across the province.

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### **Fast facts**

- CUPE education workers number 55,000 in Ontario, making us CUPE's largest bargaining group.
- Locals representing 97.8% of CUPE's education workers are affiliated to the OSBCU.
- Out of 70 CUPE locals representing 109 bargaining units, 92.9% of locals are affiliated to the OSBCU.



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## Looking back: landmarks of the past year

- CUPE won a successful Charter challenge to Bill 115 and won a remedy of \$56.7 million for CUPE members past and present. Payments were distributed in early 2018 as a remedy for the breach of our Charter rights during the years that Bill 115 was legislation in Ontario.
- In the 2017 extension of our central agreement, in which CUPE's gains included job protection language, wage increases in each year of the extension agreement; millions of dollars in funding for CUPE jobs and apprenticeship/professional development.
- The establishment of the CUPE Education Workers' Benefits Trust (EWBT), meaning we now own our own benefits and can tailor them to the needs of CUPE education workers.

## On the agenda for 2018-19

### Preparing for the next round of Central Bargaining

- Addressing health and safety issues for education workers, particularly around violence on the job.
- Taking up the fight to fix the school funding formula.
- Participation in community campaigns against school closures with the Ontario Alliance against School Closures and Fix Our Schools, which advocates for better maintenance and state of repair for our schools, and People for Education.
- Participating fully with the consultative committees with the Ministry of Education and Council of Trustees' Associations.

### Preparing for upcoming elections:

- This year we have a provincial election on June 7 and municipal and school board trustee elections on October 22.
- Elections are often described as "the chance to choose our bosses".
- Elections offer the opportunity for members to advocate for themselves and make their concerns known to candidates for elected office.

## Challenges for the year ahead

On May 25, 2018 CUPE filed an Unfair Labour Practice with the Labour Board against the Liberal Government. Our complaint alleges that the Liberal Government was rewarding organizations who did not participate in the Bill 115 Charter Challenge. The Liberal Government's decision to pay these organizations a "remedy like" settlement is tantamount to a gift from the Liberals.

As well as

- Preparing for central and local bargaining.
- Mobilizing members around bargaining.



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- Using the tools provided through the Health and Safety working group to tackle violence in the workplace.
- Participating at every decision-making table related to the work of education workers to ensure their voices are heard.
- Taking on through arbitration employers who refuse to abide by the Central Agreement.
- Supporting local leadership.
- Creating workplaces where every member feels included, respected and sees opportunity for growth.
- Being proactive in the fight against contracting of our work.

## **Bargaining surveys coming soon: time for members to have their say**

The OSBCU is the structure that will allow education workers to bargain centrally with the Council of Trustees' Association and the Crown we face in the coming years.

Even though our central and local collective agreements expire on August 31, 2019, now's the time to turn our thoughts to the next round of bargaining for CUPE school board members.

We don't yet know in what political environment we'll hold our next rounds of negotiations (yet another reason to encourage your local members to vote for a progressive NDP government on June 7). But we do know it's vital that members feel involved and supportive of the bargaining process.

One way to do that is through the bargaining survey.

The OSBCU has worked with CUPE staff to develop a bargaining survey for members and locals, to help up identify the concerns and priorities for members. Here is an outline of the timetable:

- June 8: central bargaining survey goes to local presidents.
- June 11 to 25: Survey to CUPE education workers, for return to CUPE by June 25.
- July 23 and 24: OSBCU bargaining committee will meet to discuss survey results.
- September: a working set of bargaining proposals is finalized for discussion at area meetings.
- November 3 and 4: OSBCU bargaining conference, Ottawa.
- March 2019: the earliest date under the *School Board Bargaining Act* that we can serve notice to bargain.

In many ways, the central process replicates local bargaining; the OSBCU will replicate its best practices and support locals' bargaining committees as they prepare for local bargaining.



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## Who's bargaining centrally for OSBCU

- Council president
- First vice-president
- Francophone vice-president
- 8 area vice-presidents

CUPE staff, including coordinators, researchers, communications and legal, will support the committee.

Article 11 of the OSBCU bylaws sets out how the central bargaining committee will function. Other rules that govern how we function in bargaining include local bylaws, CUPE and CUPE Ontario policies, like no-concession bargaining, and the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act* itself.

The OSBCU is committed to working with CUPE education workers on the development of bargaining proposals.

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