

CUPE Ontario School Boards Council of Unions (OSBCU) summary of education workers' bargaining proposals for better working and learning conditions in Ontario's publicly funded schools ^[1]

On Tuesday, August 2, your CUPE-Ontario School Boards Council of Unions (OSBCU) central bargaining committee met with the Council of Trustees' Associations (CTA) and provincial government negotiators for the third time.

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

We presented a full package of bargaining proposals in an effort to push the Ford government to get a fair deal done before September.

Wage increases of \$3.25/hour in each year of the collective agreement

- Education workers wages were cut by more than 11% (in real terms) from 2012 to 2021 through legislated wage freezes and restrictions on wage increases.
- Inflation over the next 3 years is projected to be at least 15-17% (and is currently over 8% this year alone), and projections on inflation keep going up.
- Education workers earn an average of \$39,000, 84% earn less than \$50,000 per year, more than half are required to work at least one additional job to make ends meet.

Pay casual and temporary employees the same rate as permanent employees

- Workers should receive equal pay for equal work.
- Some employees classified as "casual" or "temporary" by school board managers, earn several dollars per hour less than a permanent employee doing the same job.
- School boards are having difficulty filling positions because of low wages. This is worse with positions they advertise as temporary or casual

Require each school board to have a minimum staffing complement and limit boards' ability to cut staffing levels and the services provided to students

- This is our "job security" proposal, which is actually a service security proposal that would ensure staffing levels do not go below an established minimum to meet student needs
- Students rely on education workers to support their education success and keep their schools clean and safe.
- In the absence of job security/service security, boards regularly cut staff even when students and schools need them – and often even when they have the money to fund these services and jobs.

Guarantee a Designated Early Childhood Educator is assigned to every Kindergarten class

- All kindergarten students deserve to have the benefits of the two-educator model of full-day kindergarten education (DECE and teacher). DECEs have expert knowledge of early childhood development, observation skills, and assessment skills that five and six year old kids need to succeed.
- Currently if a kindergarten class has fewer than 16 students there is no requirement to have a DECE in the class.
- School boards often play with classroom placements to minimize the number of DECEs employed, denying the two-educator model to many students.

Funding to create new jobs to enhance the services provided to students

- Continuation of all funding negotiated in 2019 to ensure that jobs created in the last round of bargaining will be sustained.
- \$100 million in new funding to create additional jobs that will improve the services provided to students and schools, which could create 1500-1700 new jobs.

- More EAs will help students with different needs to succeed, more custodians will help keep schools clean and safe, more library workers will help student learning and reading skill development, more trades workers will help keep schools in a better state of repair, more school secretaries will help schools run more effectively. This list of additional services that could be provided is virtually endless.

Establish minimum weekly hours of work for full-time education worker jobs

- The standard work week for full-time Educational Assistants, Designated Early Childhood Educators, Child and Youth Workers, and other positions is 35 hours per week, but some boards schedule full time staff for as little as 30 hours per week.
- Full-time custodians, tradespersons, information technology professionals, board office staff, and others have a standard work week of 40-hours per week, but some boards provide full-time staff with fewer hours.
- Denying hours to workers leads to unpaid work, and includes (but is not limited to) workers doing unpaid prep time on a regular basis. On average, CUPE-OSBCU education workers work 92.4 minutes of unpaid work per week – the equivalent of not being paid for two weeks of work per year.
- Shortened work weeks are another form of understaffing that denies students and schools the supports they need.

Establish minimum standards on vacation, leaves of absence, and other conditions of employment

- All of these terms of employment have been effectively frozen since 2012, and all must be addressed at the central bargaining table.
- Workers who organized new bargaining units since then have been unable to make improvements to match what other CUPE-OSBCU education workers have been able to achieve.
- As a matter of fairness all workers should be entitled to similar terms and conditions of employment. Establishing minimum standards for all school boards is a step in that direction.

Funding increases to allow for improvements to benefits

- Explore the possibility of extending benefits to members who are currently not eligible for benefits or enrolled in the benefits plan. Currently, almost all members who are classified as temporary or casual are not eligible for benefits.
- Additional funds to cover the increasing costs of medications and health and dental services

Paid prep time for employees whose core duties are directly related to student/learner instruction

- Many workers who work directly with students don't receive paid prep time for their work. As a result, they do a substantial amount of unpaid work.
- Paying for prep time is a recognition of the value of the contributions of front-line workers to student achievement

Violence prevention training and recommendations to prevent violence in schools

- Preventing violence in schools is important for students and workers alike.
- A 2021 report on violence in the workplace recommended adequate resources for students (including staffing levels), supports for education workers to address their physical and mental health needs, and additional training for administrators to understand the magnitude of the problems of violence in schools.
- One key way of preventing violence in education workplaces is to have an adequate number of staff.

The above is a very short summary of key bargaining proposals tabled by CUPE-OSBCU frontline education workers. The summary does not capture all details of each proposal, nor does it capture every single proposal that was presented to the Council of Trustees Associations and the Ministry of Education negotiators. For the full package of proposals tabled on August 2, 2022.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: child care ^[4]

workforce ^[5]

working conditions ^[6]

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