

Upper Canada board, CUPE reach deal ^[1]

Author: Staff

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EXCERPTS

The Upper Canada District School Board was first in line this week in signing a deal with early childhood educators coming on board for full-time kindergarten.

Local 5678 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) reached what it calls a groundbreaking agreement with the public school board ahead of September's rollout of the new early learning program, or all-day, every-day kindergarten.

"We're very pleased," said Susan Hanson, president of Local 5678, which represents some 1,300 non-teaching staff at the public board.

The letter of agreement between CUPE and the local board is the first one signed by CUPE in Ontario to incorporate the deal, which was negotiated at the provincial level, said Hanson.

Both the union local and the board signed onto the terms of a Provincial Discussion Table (PDT) agreement recently negotiated between the province's education ministry, Ontario's school board associations and the unions representing school board staff.

Other boards across the province are expected to sign on to the framework.

The PDT agreement has now been incorporated into the current collective agreement between the public board and CUPE, and will be in effect until 2012, the union said.

Hanson said the two sides were willing to talk, but had to wait until the PDT was in place.

She believes the agreement incorporates 23 early childhood educators (ECEs) coming on board to top up the province's initial rollout of full-time kindergarten.

The provincial framework places those ECEs in a five-step salary grid, based on experience and qualifications, said Hanson, who did not know the specific salary figures when reached.

"It's one of our higher-paid classifications," she said.

The two sides endorsed the deal on Wednesday - a brighter moment, for CUPE, in a day that also saw the board adopt a 2010-11 budget that includes a reduction of 63 educational assistants, who are also represented by the local.

Board officials could not be reached for comment Friday.

The public board is planning to spend some \$3 million in the next school year to fund all-day kindergarten.

That includes \$1.99 million to roll out the McGuinty government's promise of all-day kindergarten.

The plan is to have 22 classes across the board, including, locally, two at Commonwealth Public School, one at South Edwardsburg Public School, two at Linklater Public School in Gananoque and two at Duncan J. Schouler in Smiths Falls.

In addition, the board plans to spend more than \$1 million more to expand the all-day kindergarten with its "Ready to Learn" program, which will create more junior and senior kindergarten classes taught by ECEs rather than teachers.

There are 37 board-initiated kindergarten classes slated for 10 schools, including Maynard (4), Vanier (4), South Branch (5), and Morrisburg public schools (3).

- reprinted from the Brockville Recorder and Times

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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