

CUPE School Board Sector Provincial Common Issues Negotiations

January 2008

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

A provincial common issues negotiations process between CUPE and school board employers begins on January 28.

Some of the questions school board sector members are asking about the provincial process include the following:

What's the goal of this provincial common issues negotiations process? Our goal in this process is to move the sector forward in achieving common collective agreement language on key issues – wage increments, benefits, 7-hour day for EAs, violence, staffing levels, square footage, roles and responsibilities (supervision), training, expiry date, instructor grants/funding.

What issues aren't included in the common issues process? The common issues are those that apply provincially across school boards. Some issues of local scope which don't apply to the provincial process include: classification adjustments, grievance procedures, job posting, discharge & suspension, arbitration, seniority, layoffs & recalls, vacations, sick leave and other leaves, footwear allowance, etc.

Why should CUPE school board locals support the provincial common issues process? For several years, locals in the sector have mobilized, lobbied, and coordinated collective agreement expiry dates. The result of our collective actions is a provincial common issues process, taking place as more than 60 school board agreements expiring this summer. We now have an opportunity to set the parameters for our negotiations with school board employers and make gains in key areas.

What happens if locals decide not to participate in the process? The more CUPE locals that support the common issues process, the more influence we have with school board employers in the provincial process and with the provincial government. Lack of local participation means we will lose an opportunity to take a coordinated approach to making real gains for the majority of CUPE members in the sector.

What if my school board doesn't participate? The province has indicated that all school boards are participating through their respective associations. It is not clear how the province will react if a school board does not participate, however the indicator is that it will not be a positive outcome for those boards.

What's in this for the provincial government? The provincial Liberals want to show Ontarians that their government is enhancing student success and making schools better. This includes stability and labour peace in the sector.

Why are local unions with August to December 31, 2008 expiry dates being asked to file 'notice to bargain' with their employers? This dual bargaining – one at the provincial level, the other locally, will enable us to move bargaining to a conclusion through the normal negotiations steps, if necessary.

What should local unions that don't have a contract expiry date of August to December 31, 2008 be doing? Locals should serve notice on their employers that they wish to enter into mid-term discussions regarding their collective agreement that includes the common issues under discussion at the provincial table.

What's the role of local unions in this provincial process and will locals be ratifying a settlement? The process is built on the input of all locals. The bargaining team and reference group will be in regular contact with all participating locals to develop their positions for negotiations. The provincial outcomes/settlement (if any) will be subject to review by the participating locals and will be incorporated into individual collective agreements only through the normal contract ratification process of the locals.

How will significant variations in the language in CUPE collective agreements be dealt with? A survey of collective agreement language (including letters of understanding) is now underway. The goal is to protect superior provisions in collective agreements, while improving the provisions in many collective agreements, by making the provincial outcomes subject to the ratification process of the individual participating locals.

How will the provincially negotiated wage increments affect my local? If there is, in fact, a provincial wage settlement it will be reviewed by the participating locals and then subject to the ratification process of the individual participating locals.

How will what's negotiated in the common issues process be included in local union collective agreements? When locals table local bargaining proposals they will incorporate into those proposals the "place holder" language agreed to through the provincial process.

What is, a 'as is addendum'? If there is an agreed to package from the provincial common issues table it will be incorporated into your local union bargaining proposals. However the agreed to common issues package (that we refer to as addendum) is not subject to changes by local bargaining processes.

What if this process doesn't succeed? We go to plan "B" which will be determined/set by the participating locals.

Who decides whether we are going on strike? There is no strike/lockout potential associated directly with the provincial common issues process. CUPE members in their individual locals determine when and if they are going to strike to achieve bargaining goals in each and every round of collective bargaining.