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Bulletin No. 14

Government bargaining delays threaten to disrupt classes in the fall

BURNABY—Despite assurances that the provincial government was prepared to bargain with CUPE education workers in August, negotiations have broken off indefinitely. After meeting for two and a half days last week, it became obvious talks couldn't go any further.

“They called us back to the table. We were ready, they were not. As a result, there is a danger that classes will be disrupted this fall,” said Colin Pawson, Chair of the CUPE BC K-12 Presidents’ Council. “Our committee set aside nearly two weeks to bargain, and we came to the table with ideas for cost savings. The only thing missing was a committed bargaining agent on the employer’s side.”

CUPE education workers’ collective agreements throughout the province expired over a year ago. Settlement talks took place in April 2013 but were derailed when it became clear that government had not given the BC Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSEA) a mandate to reach a settlement. BCPSEA is now directly controlled by government, but is still not in a position to bargain.

“If the government doesn’t show a commitment to bargaining, our members will take full scale job action,” said Pawson. “They’re frustrated that we’ve had three false starts to negotiating, and the clock is ticking.” CUPE representatives have proposed new bargaining dates, but nothing firm has been confirmed by employer representatives.

Once at the table, CUPE representatives emphasize that a fully-funded wage increase is the solution to ending the bargaining impasse. Your bargaining committee is looking for a comprehensive settlement, and what government has provided to date does not meet those needs.

It has been more than four years since the education assistants, clerical staff, trades, custodians, bus drivers and other workers represented by CUPE have received a wage increase. Virtually all of the 57 CUPE locals representing education workers have had positive strike votes.

Your Presidents’ Council Bargaining Subcommittee consists of Colin Pawson (Chair, Metro Vancouver), Wendy Johnson (Thompson-Okanagan), June Kaiser (Metro

Vancouver), Leslie Franklin (Fraser Valley), Cherryl MacLeod (Kootenays), Daphne Ross (North Island), Jan Peever (South Island) and Paula Cox (Northern Area).

The Canadian Union of Public Employees represents more than 27,000 education BC workers in the K-12 system.

For more information, contact your CUPE local.

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