



January 17, 2014

Bulletin No. 22

CUPE BC K-12 Presidents' Council Bargaining Update

BURNABY- Almost all of CUPE's 27,000 education workers in BC have now ratified the Provincial Framework Agreement (PFA) signed on September 18th by the CUPE BC K-12 Presidents Council Bargaining Subcommittee. The PFA was voted on and endorsed at a meeting of all Presidents September 19th. All 57 CUPE K-12 Locals are members of the Council. Council Bylaws provide that the local settlement and the provincial settlement together amend the local collective agreement.

The provincial agreement, providing an end rate 3.5% wage adjustment, new respect and recognition for Education Assistants, and an updated pay-direct prescription drug card, was negotiated with respective school districts, and local settlements were achieved and ratified by 56 CUPE Locals across BC. The lack of new provincial funding for the financial settlement indeed did create concerns for local Board of Education employers. CUPE continues to press for full funding for the settlement and a review of the public education funding formula.

Increases will be effective on the following dates:

July 1, 2013 – 1.0%

February 1, 2014 – 2.0%

May 1, 2014 – 0.5%

In advance of bargaining, a survey of CUPE education workers conducted towards the end 2012 found the BlueNet card was a top of list when asked about improvements to benefits. As CUPE education workers are some of the lowest paid public sector workers in BC, moving towards a pay-direct drug card has been a welcomed benefit for many members. No longer will members need to pay up front for prescription medication, submit receipts, and wait for reimbursement. The BlueNet card lets CUPE members to simply present the card to their pharmacist and receive medication without being put out of pocket.

Changes to prescription drug benefits involved in the new BlueRx formulary include moving to generic substitution, providing a low cost alternative to some expensive brand name pharmaceuticals. Certain drugs may require a form to be filled out by their physician. Very few members are affected by these changes, but any member covered for non-Blue RX drugs under their old plan will be grandparented for a period of one year while they work with their doctors to find alternate drugs or complete one-time paperwork.

For more information on the PFA and the updated pay-direct BlueNet card and the BlueRx formulary, visit <http://bcschools.cupe.ca/>. Or <http://pac.bluecross.ca/cupek12>.

CUPE Local 947 in School District 61 (Victoria) voted against ratification of the agreement. The local continues to seek a local settlement in order to avert job action. As a courtesy for Victoria area parents, the Local issued 72 hour strike notice on Wednesday, January 15. This will not have an impact on current settlements, including the implementation of prescription benefits changes.

While 2013 was difficult and busy year for CUPE education workers, our continuing challenge for both BC education workers and school board trustees remains the ongoing chronic underfunding of BC schools over the last ten years. This year, CUPE will endeavour to present a united front with parents, teachers, and trustees to call on the BC government to provide the necessary funding to adequately support BC students.

In Solidarity,

Colin Pawson
Chair, CUPE BC K-12 Presidents Council