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CUPE and BCPSEA begin provincial discussions

BURNABY—Representatives of CUPE's B.C. K-12 Presidents' Council Provincial Bargaining Committee (PBC) and the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) met to begin provincial discussions on Friday, June 10.

The meeting with BCPSEA focused on developing a provincial approach for dealing with priority issues for K-12 support staff. CUPE and BCPSEA agreed to recommend a statement of guiding principles around provincial discussions.

CUPE identified a number of priority areas for members including stable funding and improvements for the Public Education Benefits Trust, renewing the Support Staff Education & Adjustment Committee, recognition and respect for Education Assistants, job security, and wages & benefits.

On progress of bargaining, most CUPE K-12 locals have exchanged proposals and more than one-third of CUPE locals have been able to engage in a substantial canvass of the issues with employers. Locals report that they are unable to make progress with employers on a number of key issues at the local level.

As teachers are also engaged in bargaining, and are contemplating a possible June 24-28 strike vote, CUPE continues to maintain open communication with the BCTF.

CUPE's BC K-12 Presidents' Council met on Sunday evening via teleconference to get an update on provincial discussions and agreed to endorse moving forward with provincial discussions.

Overall, CUPE bargainers emerged from the first provincial discussions feeling positive about the process and hopeful that productive discussions can take place on key issues. The next provincial discussions are slated for July 8 and August 16 & 17 in Vancouver.

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