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**CUPE education workers stand in solidarity with education worker allies**

**TORONTO**, **ON** – Education workers represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) in Ontario stand in solidarity with Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF) and the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) members and are outraged that the Ford Conservatives are attempting to divide workers in the education system.

Starting on Tuesday, November 26, ETFO, representing 83,000 teachers and education workers, as well as OSSTF, representing more than 60,000 members, began work-to-rule job action because the Ford Conservatives and the Council of Trustees' Association (CTA) refuse to negotiate a fair collective agreement with ETFO and OSSTF.

This comes only weeks after the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU), the bargaining agent for 55,000 CUPE education workers, ratified a central collective agreement that guarantees the restoration of vital services to students and the return of 1,300 support staff jobs in the province’s schools, the result of funding of up to $78 million annually being restored.

While OSBCU/CUPE is pleased that the deal averted further job action and won these important improvements, the deal also includes an increase of only 1% for each year of the 3-year agreement to both wages as well as allowances and premiums.

“Instead of focusing on removing concessions and investing in our education system and in workers, the Government is using that part of the deal to attack our education worker allies,” says Laura Walton, President of OSBCU. "Stephen Lecce is calling our increase a reasonable offer in order to shame OSSTF and ETFO when he knows as well as we do that it doesn’t even keep up with inflation.”

Walton adds that, for CUPE members, the lowest paid workers in the education system, the increase was not good enough and that she and members across the province support their allies and their call for a higher wage increase. Furthermore, the OSBCU deal includes a “me too” clause which ensures that their wage increases will match those of the province’s teachers.

“This clause, and our ability to resist concessionary attacks on our sick leave plan, among other things, happened because of solidarity,” says Walton. “We recognize the solidarity support from our education worker allies and we extend our own to them now.”
“The government needs to stop attempting to divide worker against worker and workers against parents,” says Fred Hahn, CUPE Ontario President. “We call on the government to actually start listening to the people – workers and parents alike – remove the concessions at the table, reverse the cuts, and invest in our publicly funded, publicly delivered, education system.”

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