

Dear CUPE 3903 Members,

Today the York administration appealed to labour legislation enacted by Mike Harris' government to force a ratification vote on the administration's offer of January 7 2009. Both the executive and bargaining team convinced that this is yet another attempt by the administration to derail bargaining. The CUPE 3903 bargaining team arrived on the morning of January 9 as scheduled, ready to bargain, only to be informed that the administration was walking away from the table. We are very proud of the strength and solidarity of our members, and we are certain that this latest move will backfire against the employer.

The administration would have us believe that the choice is to either ratify their offer now or stay out indefinitely. But the reality is that with a strong show of support by voting no, the union will be in a strong position to negotiate a fair settlement for our membership. Once the membership rejects this "un-fair and un-equitable" offer, we will be in a stronger position to negotiate a speedy resolution to this strike on favorable terms.

In 2000-1, near to the end of our local's last strike, the administration also called for a forced ratification vote, which was unsuccessful in resolving the strike. It resulted in a return to the bargaining table where a deal was reached within three days. We are certain that our members will be mindful of the progress made in bargaining in the past few days, and how a return to the table would be the most productive way to reach a sustainable settlement that puts us back in the classroom. Yesterday, the union representing Ottawa Transit Workers overwhelmingly rejected a forced ratification vote, and have now returned to the bargaining table.

The administration's current offer is much less than what we received in our last contract. This current contract is valued at less than a total increase of 3% in each year of the agreement, and much less in the third, while our previous contracts have been valued between 4-5% in each year of the agreement. At the General Membership Meeting on January 8, over 90% of the 600+ members in attendance voted that they would reject this offer if it were brought to ratification. The membership also voted to condemn the repeated ways that the administration has sought to undermine the collective bargaining process and derail it through unnecessary delays and tactics such as this vote.

What does your vote against this offer mean? It means a rapid settlement which will result in more accessible graduate education, job security for contract faculty, and improved working and learning conditions at York University. While we have addressed some of the issues related to funding and fund protection in recent days, what your vote NO will ensure is that bargaining will continue on graduate student funding for Unit 1 and 3 members, and job security for Unit 2 members. It will also allow us to address the recent job losses for contract faculty, the sharp reduction in the Extended Health Benefits fund, the significant drop in conversion numbers each year, and continue to negotiate a superior Teaching Stream Appointment program.

Once the membership rejects not only this offer, but also the offensive manner in which it is being forced on us, we will be in an exceptionally strong position to come to a speedy resolution of the strike.

Sincerely,  
The CUPE 3903 Bargaining Team and Executive