

**On The Frontlines** was sanctioned by the Bargaining Mobilization Committee (now the Strike Committee) of CUPE 3903, and is produced by rank and file members. The views herein do not represent an "official line," meaning members are encouraged to write in and contribute their thoughts on bargaining, mobilization, and issues we face as academic workers at York University.

If you'd like to contribute, write to us at [otfl3903@gmail.com](mailto:otfl3903@gmail.com)

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Also, keep an eye out for a pamphlet on Tuition Indexation. Our members recently unanimously passed a motion stating that we would not settle without a tuition indexation provision that protects both current and future members.

## **RALLY FOR BETTER EDUCATION**

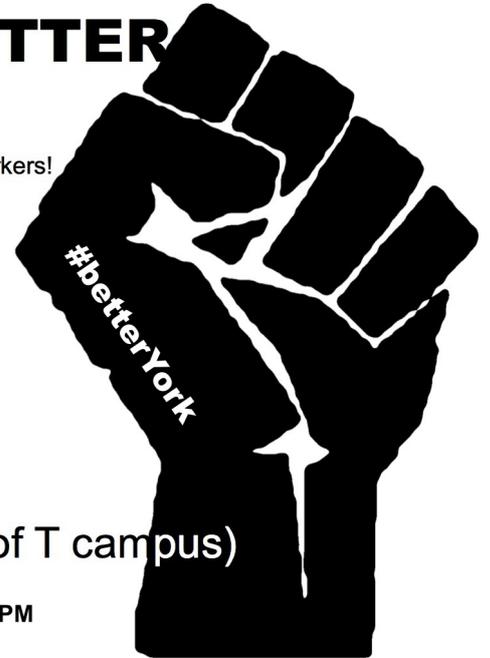
Solidarity with York and U of T education workers!



**Feb 26<sup>th</sup> 3PM**

**Simcoe Building (U of T campus)**

shuttle bus from Vari Hall (York U) @ 2PM



## **Strike FAQs**

Members of the Strike Committee have been busy drafting our strike policy, which will need general membership approval before becoming official. That said, the following FAQs have been addressed on the basis of that provisional policy.

### **What does 'being on strike' actually mean in the context of a university?**

"Being on strike" means we withdraw our labour power. That means that we don't perform our employment-related duties. It also means fulfilling our strike duties (see below).

### **Who is eligible to receive strike pay?**

Members who are on York's payroll as of the start of the strike are eligible to receive strike pay. In other words, members who have contracts that started in September and end in April would be eligible for strike pay as would members who have contracts that started in January and end in April. Our Strike Committee has recommended that members without a current contract but who had a contract from September to December should also qualify. This policy has not yet been endorsed by our membership.

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**How much is strike pay? How many hours must I perform strike duties in order to receive strike pay?** Strike pay is \$300 per week (\$1200 per month). Members must engage in strike duties for 20 hours per week in order to receive strike pay. The Strike Committee is investigating whether it will be possible to pro-rate strike pay for members that cannot do 20 hours of strike duty in a given week.

**What strike duties can I perform to receive strike pay?**

Generally, members must picket in order to receive strike pay. If this is not possible due to mobility or other documented health issues, alternative duty will be arranged. According to CUPE National policy, members cannot receive strike

pay for attending meetings.

**Can I communicate with my students during a strike?**

CUPE 3903 members should not be teaching during a strike, but members can provide strike information and updates to students. It may be quite useful to keep those lines of communication open. As a union, we will try to keep students informed via our website, social media and our Strike Headquarters.

**Can I come on campus to do my lab research?**

Yes. If you have ongoing lab work that needs to be taken care of daily you should most certainly attend to this work. Keep in mind, however, that some of your lab work might be CUPE work and should be withdrawn in the context of a strike. If, for instance, you

do work for your supervisor that doesn't contribute to the completion of your own thesis work, it's covered by the Collective Agreement and you should make arrangements with your supervisor to hold off on this work until any labour action is resolved. If not doing this work will jeopardize the project as a whole, then the Local recommends doing the minimum required to maintain the project's integrity.

**Can I use the library?**

In the event of a strike, the Local would encourage members to use University facilities as little as possible. If members absolutely must access the library, however, they should feel free to do so, as refusing to use the library has no impact on York's finances.

## Defined Childcare Benefit is Winnable

**Ryan Toews & Graeme Reniers**

At the priorities Special General Members Meeting earlier in February, Unit 1 narrowly decided not to make our childcare proposal (which would provide a defined benefit of \$200 per month to members with children under the age of 13, or those above 13 with a disability) a priority, but Units 2 and 3 overwhelmingly did. This puts the union in a strange place since we are prioritizing a demand for some members but not others. While it was argued by some members of the Bargaining Team and the

Executive that the proposal would be too much to ask for, we suggest that this proposal is not only important but also winnable, at least in some form.

Our current wage demand, consistent with previous gains, is 3% annually. Over the life of a three year contract, this would cost York an additional \$6 million by the third year. Wages should not exhaust our compensation gains, but will be the largest share.

The employer costed our child care proposal at just over \$3 million annually. To get this number, the employer assumed that in any

given year, more than 1/3 of our membership have qualifying children and would receive this benefit. As usual, they have drastically over-exaggerated costs.

Using the employer's costing documents, we can get a rough estimate that 300 members would be eligible to receive this defined benefit, at an approximate cost of \$720,000 annually. This is an estimate and there may be reasons to push that number up or down. A simple way to manage the uncertainty which often causes the employer to be hesitant is to agree on a cap.

## Childcare Continued

Right now, the important thing is to get defined benefit language in the agreement in some form, which would allow us to build on it in subsequent bargaining rounds.

One way to win this language is to have it come out of wage increases, but this is not necessarily the only path. A limit on our wage demand is that we are asking for 3%. We can't do better because we are not asking for more. But that doesn't mean the employer will be unwilling to provide compensation in other ways to reach a settlement. Much of the money in the Unit 1 and 3

agreements comes in compensation not directly tied to wages. A good agreement typically does not just mean wage increases but also other forms of compensation. A second limit on our wage demand is the expectations of other unions on campus whose wage costs are substantially higher. Our payroll is small compared to YUSA and YUFA, but whatever raise we get will figure into the employer's negotiations with them. This puts more pressure on York to hold our wages down, but a settlement can be reached by providing compensation in other ways.

This is not to say that this will be easy, but this is a winnable benefit, and one that is needed for many of our members. Child care is expensive, often costing members in excess of \$1,000 a month. The on campus child care that we do help fund through our collective agreement is under resourced relative to the demand already, and unable to meet the needs of many members who may work on another campus (Glendon) or whose schedules do not match those of the on campus child care (tough luck if you teach in the evening).

## Rethinking Crime in York University's Village

**Justin Panos**

In 2002, York University's Development Corporation sold the Southlands to Tribute Homes, which built the community along Sentinel Road known as "the Village". A scandal arose when Joseph Sorbara was outted by the Toronto Star for sitting on both company boards as the land was sold for 50% below market value. A 2005 internal review cleared Sorbara unsurprisingly.

The real scandal was missed. Tribute Homes essentially developed a private slum on York's Southlands. According to one working-class York student, who requested anonymity, this has led to the production of inequality, crime, and violence, while York furtively turns a blind eye.

"Many homes are often not up to building safety codes, such as proper drywall, ventilation, wiring, escape

routes, etc." said this student.

"Many homes house more people than they can accommodate...Personally I used to live in a house that housed 15 units and only had 1 kitchen and 2 bathrooms."

The Village is a low-income community composed mainly of students. Due to privatization, no system of accountability exists. Individual leases and "securitization" target racialized people, such as 18-year-old Junior Manon, who died in 2010 while being apprehended by police on Founders Rd. The nameless student told me York's security bulletins are "PR stunts"; follow-ups are never released and the conditions giving rise to criminality are never questioned.

The production of a private slum feeds the production of poverty. The Sorbara Group, including York Chan-

cellor Greg Sorbara, Joseph Sorbara's brother, owns acres of commercial property in the Keele and Finch area. This land is rented to fast-food joints like KFC and other dubious corporate chains that rely on atypical, non-standard employment that foster inequality. As Finance Minister of Ontario, Greg Sorbara was steadfastly opposed to raising the minimum wage but managed to lower the corporate tax rate to just about the lowest in North America.

CUPE 3903 should take the lead in a community organizing initiative to investigate conditions and animate collective resistance to the suzerainty of upmarket real estate and authoritarian policing. A strong community base is a potentiality for the union and in step with CUPE's social union mandate.

## Strike Preparation Week

### **Monday, Feb. 23, Campus-wide poster run**

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Stop by the CUPE 3903 office, 143 Atkinson, and pick up posters to distribute in your department for Strike Preparation Week and for the "final offer" Special General Membership Meeting. They can be picked up all week!

### **Tuesday, Feb. 24, Strike training meeting**

4:00 - 7:00 p.m., 004 Atkinson Building

This is the third in a series of strike training meetings for members of CUPE 3903. More meetings will be scheduled as needed.

Members are strongly encouraged to attend at least one strike training meeting. Each meeting will cover the basics of conducting a strike, including strategy and tactics, logistics, mapping the workplace, picket duty, alternative picket duty, and other ways that members can support and participate in the strike.

If you plan on attending, please RSVP by email to [sectreasurer3903@gmail.com](mailto:sectreasurer3903@gmail.com).

Food and light refreshments will be provided.

### **Wednesday, Feb. 25, CUPE Food Bank Challenge**

1:00 - 2:00 p.m., Vari Hall

Join members and allies of CUPE 3903 as the union presents a donation of \$1,000 to the York Federation of Students' Food Bank. As part of its challenge, CUPE 3903 will invite each of the top five earners in the York administration to meet or beat the union's donation.

For more information, please email [CUPE3903csu1@gmail.com](mailto:CUPE3903csu1@gmail.com).

### **Thursday, Feb. 26, Get on the solidarity bus!**

Support education workers at York and U of T

Send-off rally in front of Vari Hall: 1:30 p.m.

Bus departs Vari Hall: 2:00 p.m.

Bus arrives at U of T: 3:00 p.m.

CUPE 3903 is organizing a solidarity bus to transport members and allies to a solidarity rally for education workers organized by CUPE 3902, our sister local at the University of Toronto. CUPE 3902 will be in a legal strike position on February 27.

Please help us bring a large contingent of members and allies from York to the U of T rally, and

build unity among education workers throughout the sector.

To book a free seat on the bus, please email [CUPE3903strikecommittee@gmail.com](mailto:CUPE3903strikecommittee@gmail.com). Non-members are welcome to join us.

Bus transportation to the U of T rally is one-way and will not return passengers to York.

### **Friday, Feb. 27, Strike headquarters grand opening**

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Location TBA

Near Keele campus, York University

All York students, staff and community members are invited to visit our strike headquarters during this grand opening and day-long open house. We will provide free food and refreshments for all guests. Music and entertainment will also be provided.

The location of the headquarters will be announced in the coming days, so stay tuned for updates.

For more information, please email [sectreasurer3903@gmail.com](mailto:sectreasurer3903@gmail.com).

### **Saturday, Feb. 28 & Sunday, Mar. 1, Membership phone-through**

10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

CUPE 3903 office, 143 Atkinson Building

– or – From your home

Be part of a marathon phone-through of our entire membership, to remind members about the "final offer" Special General Membership Meeting on Monday, March 2 at 5:00 p.m., and to provide the latest bargaining updates.

To volunteer for the phone-through, please email [CUPE3903chiefstewardunit2@gmail.com](mailto:CUPE3903chiefstewardunit2@gmail.com).

### **Monday, Mar. 2, Special General Membership Meeting: 'Final offer'**

5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (or later)

Location TBA, York University

The Bargaining Team will present the final offer from the Employer. After a period of discussion, members will vote by secret ballot on whether to accept the offer.

Food and refreshments will be provided. For a childcare / elder care subsidy, please email [sectreasurer3903@gmail.com](mailto:sectreasurer3903@gmail.com).