

Education workers need a raise - the affordability crisis makes wages a top priority!

CUPE-OSBCU Central Bargaining Proposals 2026

What is being proposed – and why it matters to education workers?

From our bargaining survey, wages were clearly identified as the top priority. With high inflation, economic uncertainty, and the real challenge of affordability, this proposal focuses on 4 key pieces.

1 Elimination of Lower Wage Grid Steps (Equal Pay for Equal Work)

- If the job is worth the top rate, everyone doing the full job should be paid that rate.
- Members are expected to perform the full duties of their role from day one, so their pay should reflect that.
- Experience still matters. It is already recognized through seniority, job security, transfers and postings, and vacation entitlement.
- Each additional week of vacation is roughly equal to a 2% wage increase.
- There is also a proposal to improve vacation entitlement, further recognizing experience and time with the board.
- Collapsing the wage grid balances equal pay for the job itself with fair recognition for long service.

2 Casual and Temporary Workers Earn the Job Rate

- If you are doing the job, you should be paid the same rate – whether you are permanent, temporary, or casual.
- Many boards pay casual workers significantly less, often \$5/hour or more below the permanent rate, even though they are expected to do the same work.
- Employers use lower casual rates to save money and keep positions casual even during long-term vacancies.
- This contributes to recruitment and retention problems because the wages are too low.
- Data from locals within OSBCU shows that equal rates for casual workers support better recruitment and retention.
- This proposal is about fairness, addressing low wages for precarious workers, and helping fix the staffing crisis in schools.
- Permanent employees still keep important advantages such as benefits, sick leave, and job security.

3 Hybrid Wage Increases

- Last round of bargaining a flat increase model was proposed where everyone received the same dollar amount.
- This time, the proposal is a hybrid model.
- Members would receive either a flat increase or a percentage increase – whichever is better for them.
- In every case, members receive whichever option increases their wages the most.
- Flat increase helps prevent wage gaps from growing.
- Because a gap already exists, the percentage increase helps ensure higher wage earners also see an increase above inflation.

4 COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment)

- COLA is designed to protect wages when inflation rises faster than negotiated increases.
- If inflation is higher than the wage increase, there is an additional adjustment to help close the gap.
- This is more complex with a hybrid wage model, but it is still possible.
- A model has been developed that maintains fairness in the hybrid approach while also helping protect members from falling behind inflation.

Why Wages Matter?

Wages were the top priority in the bargaining survey. CUPE-OSBCU wage proposals are about fairness, affordability, recruitment and retention, and protecting members from falling behind.

CUPE school board members are building power in workplaces and communities to win bargaining demands. Contact your Local Executive to get involved in your local strike planning and community outreach efforts to make your voice count.