

# THE ALLY

A PUBLICATION OF CUPE LOCAL 3906

Volume 2 Issue 2

## Preoccupied by Occupy

**Also Featuring:**

**Unit 1 Bargaining Results**

**CUPE National Convention Report**

**Health & Safety Includes Mental Health**

Photo by Martin Reis via Flickr

## Letter From the President

Hello Members,

In the past few months your Executive and Staff have been working at a torrid pace. Many of us have been working multiple positions as executives, bargaining team members, bargaining support team members, handling communications, and/or going from department to department to speak directly with members. We are making every effort to keep you informed through emails, online posts, drop-ins and walk-arounds, but we have also been taking your comments, ideas, and criticisms back to our various committees for discussion and consideration.

At the very end of that last term those efforts were rewarded; we have reached an agreement with the employer for a Unit 1 Collective Agreement. The support of our membership through a strike mandate was critical in obtaining what I feel is an excellent deal for our members and our Local. I am optimistic regarding our bargaining prospects for Unit 3 and we remain committed to negotiating fair collective agreements for our Postdoctoral Fellows.

Nick Longaphy  
President  
CUPE Local 3906

## CUPE 3906 Equity Statement

Union solidarity is based on the principle that union members are equal and deserve mutual respect at all levels. Any behaviour that creates conflict prevents union members from working together to strengthen the union and its initiatives.

As unionists we aim to achieve mutual respect, cooperation and understanding throughout our membership. We neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

A hostile or offensive environment includes discriminatory speech or conduct, which is racist, sexist, transphobic or homophobic and/or discrimination based on (in)ability, age, class, religion, language and ethnic origin. A hostile and intimidating environment also includes attempts to de-voice other members by ignoring GMM speaking practices or by talking over, yelling, rolling eyes at or shutting down contributions made by others.

Sometimes discrimination takes the form of harassment. Harassment means using real or perceived power to abuse, devalue or humiliate others. Harassment will not be perceived or treated as frivolous behaviour. The uneasiness and resentment that harassment creates hinder the growth of the union by hampering our capacity to work together on shared concerns such as decent wages, safe working conditions and justice in the workplace, society and in our union.

The above-mentioned components of a hostile environment hurt and divide the union and compromise CUPE's policies and commitments to equality. Members, staff and elected officers must be mindful that all members deserve dignity, equality and respect.



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### Editor

Will Jaques

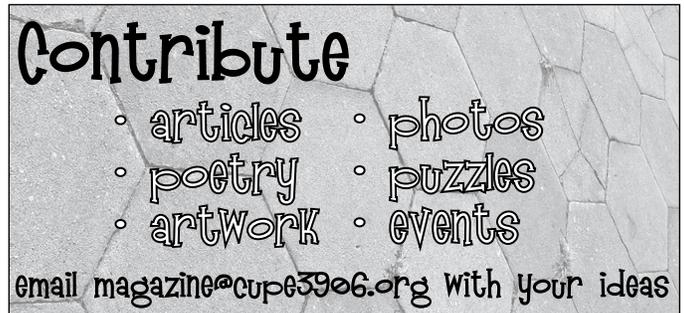
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Recording Secretary.....Angela Harrison  
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Postings Officer.....Steve Dingwall  
International Officer.....Sepandar Sepehr  
Undergraduate Officer.....Vacant  
Health & Safety Officer.....Vacant  
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Staff Representative.....Nancy MacBain  
Staff Representative.....Dave Hauch

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# Health & Safety Means Mental Health Too

By Nick Longaphy

**T**he Labour Movement maintains a constant commitment to fight for improved Health and Safety standards in the workplace. Your Local has mirrored this effort by proposing improved training for our members, working to identify workplace hazards, and partnering with other unions on campus to fight back against cuts to necessary services.

But the dangers that our members face are not limited to physical hazards. Health and Safety in our workplace also means maintaining Mental Health. Given the number of responsibilities we face as workers, students and within our families, we need to develop skills to manage stress and maintain positive relationships both at home and in the workplace. Some of our colleagues also face serious issues such as domestic discord or violence, alcohol or drug dependency, and/or feelings of depression.

At the invitation of the employer, I attended a presentation this past month on McMaster's Employee Family Assistance Plan (EFAP). The program is designed to provide immediate, short-term assistance to Employees of McMaster or their dependants. Currently, CUPE 3906 has successfully negotiated access to the EFAP for Sessional Faculty, Sessional Music Faculty, and Postdoctoral Fellows. Unfortunately, despite our attempts in the recent round of bargaining, the Employer did not agree to allow Teaching Assistants to access the program.

The help that is offered through the EFAP is one-on-one and can be arranged within a few days, but is also delivered through online programs or immediate over the phone assistance, if necessary. The online tutorials are also available on a variety of useful topics. I remain impressed by the range of services offered by this program. Aside from providing assistance on some of

the serious issues identified above, EFAP also includes financial counselling, legal advice, and nutritional information.

The Employee Family Assistance Plan is fully confidential. To access the plan, you need only call their toll free number and identify yourself as a McMaster Employee, or the partner/dependant of a McMaster Employee. Neither the employer, direct supervisors, nor any other McMaster employee will be given any information that can be used to identify the members who take advantage of this program.

As academic workers, we all face times when work related stress reaches difficult levels. Many of us also face challenges related to family, financial, or marital issues. When these stressors combine the load can be difficult to handle, especially alone. It is important that we all take our mental health seriously as it is intimately connected to our physical well being and the well being of those we care about.

Please, if you feel that you can benefit from the use of the EFAP, take advantage of this service. If a member of your family or one of your colleagues is experiencing difficulty or needs counselling, encourage them to do so as well. Do not wait until a small problem has reached a critical level.

“Homewood Human Solutions is McMaster University's Employee & Family Assistance Program provider. Their services are available 24/7 and are free to employees and their families. Homewood Human Solutions provides counselling, work-life and health coaching, health risk assessments, and much more. For more information, visit the Homewood Human Solutions website at [www.homewoodhumansolutions.ca](http://www.homewoodhumansolutions.ca) or call their toll free number, 1-800-663-1142.”

# Preoccupied by Occupy

By: Hayley Goodchild & Anthony Gracey

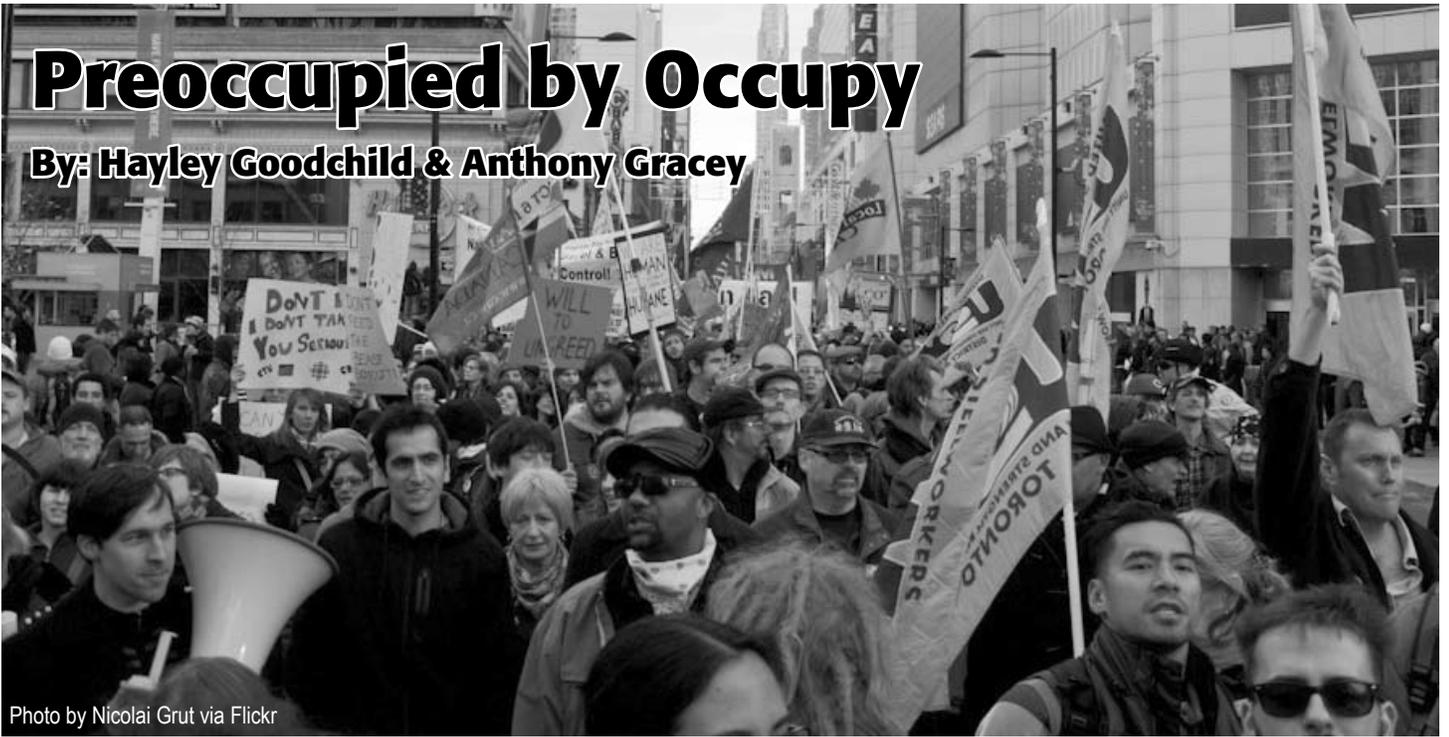


Photo by Nicolai Grut via Flickr

**A**s a trade unionist active in the labour movement, I have no problem saying the Occupy Movement is a hopeful one in which the labour movement should listen to, emulate, and work cooperatively into the future. Despite the recent setbacks and dismantling of the movement's encampments, as of this writing the Occupy Movement is still mobilized at McMaster University, occupying a corner of the student union building and spreading their message to all those curious enough to ask the movement's members about it. What that message is, how it relates to the labour movement, and why the labour movement needs to engage the Occupy Movement are integral themes in the following discussion. The Occupy Movement at McMaster and elsewhere represents a potentially solid ally to the labour movement. Ultimately, the opportunity to work together is rooted in the fact that both movements want the same thing: the end of social inequality in human societies. As a trade unionist active in the labour movement I strongly believe it is wise to suggest that by listening to one another and by working together, we can achieve that lofty goal.

Occupations like the one now taking place in McMaster's student union centre are not new or unique to university environments, not even McMaster's. In 1997, students occupied Gilmour Hall in support of a tuition freeze and better funding structures. Other university occupations have mobilized over issues unique to their campus; issues such as unfair tuition fee increases or improper behaviour by the university administration have mobilized students in California and Quebec. In September 2009, two years before Occupy Wall Street, the Oakland General Strike, and the UC Davis pepper spraying commanded the attention of the mainstream media, students at UC Santa Cruz occupied the Graduate Student Commons. Their message, emblazoned on a simple flyer distributed on campus, was clear:

The situation at the university has become untenable. Workers are losing their jobs. Students are dropping out of school. The promise of a good life at the end of a university education is now an illusion. Compared to the severity of the crisis, the solutions on offer are woefully inadequate. The time for pointless negotiations is over. But a single day of action, announced in advance, is not enough. Escalation is absolutely necessary. It remains for the people to seize what is theirs. OCCUPY CALIFORNIA.

Similarly, serious infringements by the Mexican government on that country's university system have led to a series of occupations and other direct actions by students against these infringements. This current occupation of McMaster is slightly different from these other occupations on university campuses, however. It is part of a broader movement mobilized beyond the confines of McMaster University. It reaches into the streets and institutions in places across the continent and around the world, and it is a movement collectively critical of the inequitable distribution of wealth in society and the role of universities in the production of this inequality.

If this is a fair assessment of the movement's beliefs, then the Occupy Movement's discourse reflects issues that the Canadian labour movement has been struggling to rectify ever since the Winnipeg General Strike of 1913 and likely earlier: the distribution of wealth in society. The Occupy Movement's message—that one percent of the population owns ninety-nine percent of the wealth and that this distribution is unconscionable, is both inspiring and challenging in its simplicity. It is also a strong message

to labour unions, which have arguably permitted this staggering disparity by remaining complacent to the development of two-tiered wage systems so prevalent in some of the world's economies. This two-tiered wage system – when two individuals or groups who do the same work are compensated differently – exists within our very own local since we have undergraduate and graduate tutorial assistants doing the exact same work. Undergraduate tutorial assistants are barely paid half of what their graduate counterparts make. In our latest round of contract negotiations, the local sought to rectify this inequality by winning wage increases in years three, four, and five of the new five-year collective agreement that will begin to close the gap between undergraduate and graduate TAs.

To be sure, the labour movement and the Occupy Movement have a lot in common. The Occupy Movement seeks to equalize the distribution of wealth all over the world just as unions like our own local, CUPE 3906, seeks to equalize wages to dismantle two-tiered wage environments that contribute to the inequitable distribution of wealth identified by the Occupy Movement. While the bargaining team of the local did not succeed in closing this gap entirely, it did highlight the issue with the membership and at the same time won small increases in the later years of the contract. The local will have to remain committed to doing so moving forward. We can learn from Occupy. Just as the Occupy Movement remains committed to equalizing the distribution of wealth in broader society regardless of what form it takes in the future at McMaster and beyond, both movements must be cognizant of the fact that wealth re-distribution takes time and requires much toil and struggle.

Critics of the movement have raised the point that the message of the Occupy Movement is fragmented, incoherent and not sustainable. These critics have likely not talked to members long enough to get a sense of why they are mobilized. After doing so it becomes clear that one of the primary beliefs of the movement is that a more equitable distribution of wealth and opportunity will go a long way in alleviating social ills such as poverty. To build a society where this is the case will require different institutions, forms of organizing, and people. The Occupy Movement is comprised of people

who are building these things daily through their mobilization. This is a movement committed to changing society and is committed to doing so knowing full well that this kind of change requires fundamental shifts in how we relate to one another.

Recent setbacks aside, what the members of the movement on McMaster represent is a part of what seems like a global awakening to the preventable existence of social inequality in human societies. As tent cities are dismantled, the risk of the movement losing its momentum is real. This is why a progressive labour movement must consider engaging the Occupy Movement, perhaps now more than ever. It represents a movement beyond the point of production that is struggling to change the conditions responsible for the struggles the labour movement engages in on a daily basis. Why don't we cooperate in their distinct yet related workplace and non-workplace struggles? The Oakland Occupy Movement and the Oakland labour movement recently hinted at the possibilities of the movements' power when they collectively organized a one-day general strike that shut down the port of Oakland and disrupted the accumulation of profit by trade for twenty-four hours. We would do well to heed their example.

You can take down all the tents in parks you want but the movement will live on in people's minds as it continues to develop in the future. Wherever the movement heads next, as a trade unionist I believe it is important that the labour movement



Photo by Alexa Clark via Flickr

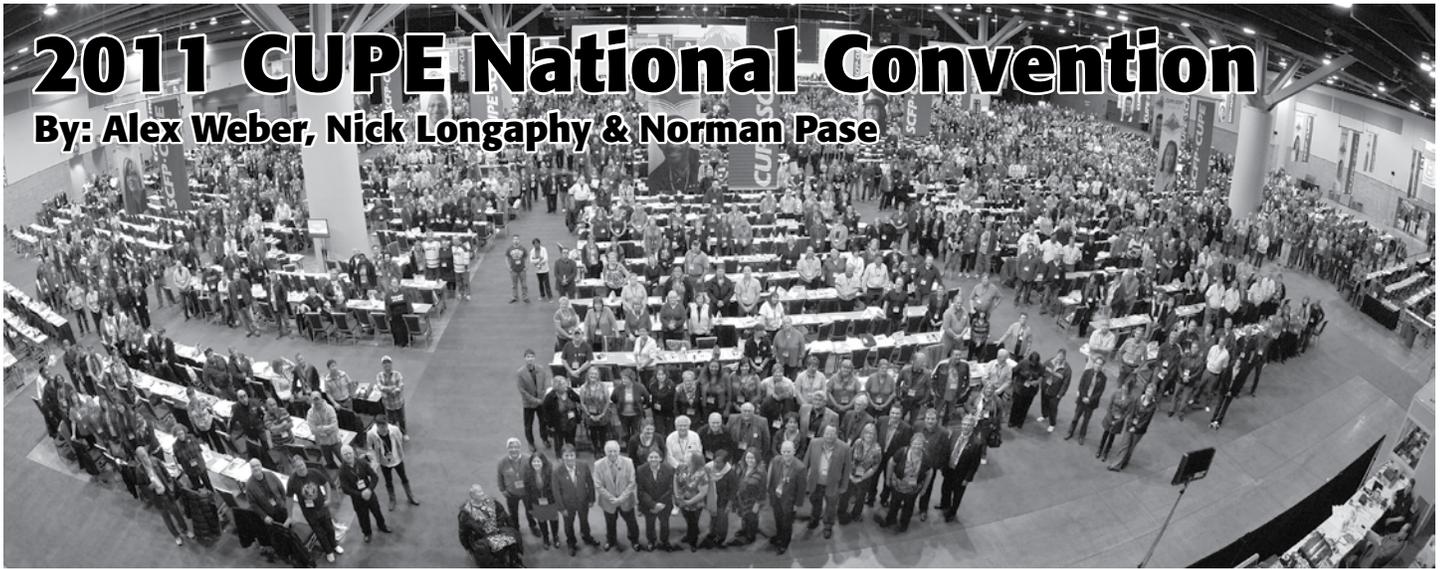


Photo by Martin Reis via Flickr

engage the Occupy Movement and work with its members to build better human societies in the future that are based on a more equitable distribution of the wealth created by humankind. I say this not only for the sake of our own local's job conditions but for the conditions of other workplaces too. Whether it was coordinating direct action in Oakland or staving off a police raid in Toronto, the movements' cooperation proved highly effective at times and bodes well for further association.

# 2011 CUPE National Convention

By: Alex Weber, Nick Longaphy & Norman Pase



**D**uring the final few days of October and the first week of November, we were pleased to attend CUPE's National Convention in Vancouver, BC along with our Staff. This national gathering of Canada's largest Union welcomed almost 2,100 CUPE members from across the country, representing every province.

The purpose of a National CUPE Convention is to bring workers from the various Public Sectors together to discuss shared priorities, vote on proposed resolutions, and determine the content of an Action Plan that CUPE National will move forward with over the next two years until our next Convention. We were also able to attend various forums sponsored by CUPE to learn about other issues and priorities.

Here are the highlights of just a few of the resolutions that were developed by independent CUPE Locals and then passed at our National Convention: An education action to help increase Aboriginal Nation's access to safe water; launching a campaign for fair taxation to increase public funding; and to support and promote national anti-bullying day on April 13th including the development of training and promotional materials. In total CUPE National will evaluate over 250 resolutions.

Our time in the smaller forums included the National Youth Worker's Forum, the Health and Safety Forum, the Global Justice Forum and the Aboriginal Workers Forum. In particular, our delegation was intrigued by a presentation by workers who travelled from Burma to speak about their struggles to help over 2,000 political prisoners being held by the Burmese government. Norm was also particularly active as a part of the Aboriginal Workers Forum, which brought a campaign of awareness to the National Convention to draw attention to over 600 missing Aboriginal Women. The Convention was unanimous in calling upon the Federal Government of Canada to investigate these disappearances.

Beyond the election of National and Regional representatives (also a priority of the Convention), our time in Vancouver was truly valuable. We were able to connect with other Locals across Canada to discuss common issues and learn about the struggles of other Locals, such as the CUPE Local at the University of Sherbrooke, which has been without a Collective Agreement for over three years. These relationships will serve the labour movement and our Local better as we move forward on labour and social justice issues at both the Local and National Level.

## Connect with your Local online

[www.cupe3906.org](http://www.cupe3906.org)



[www.facebook.com/cupe3906](http://www.facebook.com/cupe3906)



[www.twitter.com/cupe\\_3906](http://www.twitter.com/cupe_3906)



[www.flickr.com/photos/cupe\\_3906](http://www.flickr.com/photos/cupe_3906)

# Unit 1 Bargaining Summary

## What to expect in your new contract

**A**fter a year filled with surveys, consultations, and a number of meeting dates with the Employer, your bargaining team was able to reach a deal in late November on a new collective agreement that will expire in 2016. This page outlines the major gains we made in our three main priority areas: wages, benefits and workload. For more detailed information you can visit [www.cupe3906.org](http://www.cupe3906.org).

### Wages

#### First 2 Years

- Grad members will receive a \$200 lump sum – equivalent to 1.9%\* - in each of the first two years
- Undergrad members will receive a \$150 lump sum – equivalent to 2.6%\* - in each of the first two years

\*assuming 260 hours in a year

#### Last 3 Years

| Year/Group                   | Appox % | Hourly Rate | Value of 260 hours/year |
|------------------------------|---------|-------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Current/years 1&amp;2</i> |         |             |                         |
| Grads                        | -       | \$39.40     | \$10,244.00             |
| Undergrads                   | -       | \$22.15     | \$5,759.00              |
| <i>Sept 1, 2013</i>          |         |             |                         |
| Grads                        | 2.0     | \$40.20     | \$10,452.00             |
| Undergrads                   | 2.5     | \$22.70     | \$5,902.00              |
| <i>Sept 1, 2014</i>          |         |             |                         |
| Grads                        | 2.0     | \$41.00     | \$10,660.00             |
| Undergrads                   | 2,5     | \$23.30     | \$6,058.00              |
| <i>Sept 1, 2015</i>          |         |             |                         |
| Grads                        | 2.0     | \$41.80     | \$10,868.00             |
| Undergrads                   | 3.0     | \$24.00     | \$6,240.00              |

#### Additional Hours for Training

Beginning January 1, 2012 all TAs will have an additional 3 hours allocated for Health & Safety Training. *While this is payment for work done, if the training has already been completed the hours cannot be re-allocated.*

These additional hours are valued as follows:

| Year         | Grads    | Undergrads |
|--------------|----------|------------|
| Jan 1, 2012  | \$118.20 | \$66.45    |
| Sept 1, 2013 | \$120.60 | \$68.10    |
| Sept 1, 2014 | \$123.00 | \$69.90    |
| Sept 1, 2015 | \$125.40 | \$72.00    |

### Benefits

#### General Benefits Fund

| Year            | Amount in Fund | Notes                                    |
|-----------------|----------------|--|
| Prior to expiry | \$150,000      |  |
| Sept. 1, 2011   | \$152,700      | \$2,700 moved from elsewhere in contract |
| Sept. 1, 2012   | \$182,700      | Additional \$30,000                      |
| Sept. 1, 2013   | \$182,700      |  |
| Sept. 1, 2014   | \$182,700      |  |
| Sept. 1, 2015   | \$202,700      | Additional \$20,000                      |

#### Family Dental:

Effective on ratification the Employer will provide \$12,000 for the union to disperse among those paying Family Dental rates for the purposes of offsetting the costs of the Family Dental Plan.

*NOTE: These funds have been moved from the Union Service fund previously supplied by the Employer.*

#### Paid Parental Leave Top-up

Supplementary benefits, modeled after existing Pregnancy Leave top-up provisions, will be available to members taking Parental Leave. *This provision is effective September 1, 2013.*

### Workload

#### Guarantee Deferral

TAs may defer up to one term of their guarantee. Such deferral could be used to focus on comps, take additional family, or other uses at the determination of the member.

#### Academic Accommodation

If academic work will suffer due to TA workload, members can request an extension from their employment supervisor, which cannot unreasonably be denied.

#### Clearer language around Additional Hours

Much clearer language outlining the process to follow if a member reaches the cap for his/her TA hours. Clear understanding that people cannot be expected to perform work beyond their allotted hours.

#### Additional hours for Health & Safety Training

As outlined in the Wages section.

# SUPPORT TORONTO CITY WORKERS



photo by Gabriel O'Brien via Flickr

**O**ver 30,000 members of CUPE Locals 416, 79, 2998 and 4948 are currently under attack by the Rob Ford administration at Toronto City Hall. Representing outside and inside municipal employees, staff at local community centres and workers at the Toronto Public Library, these locals are on the forefront of defending quality public services in the city of Toronto.

Despite the ability of community activists to dial back some of Ford's cuts in the recent budget vote, a number of cuts still went through. The Ford administration has also sent clear indications that they will lock out city workers unless they agree to major job security concessions. **The result of this fight in the City of Toronto will set the stage for what happens to public services across the country.**

The fight of CUPE members in Toronto is all of our fight, check out the links below to find out what you can do to support our Sisters and Brothers in Toronto.

For more information, and to find out how you can help, visit:

[www.TorontoTogether.ca](http://www.TorontoTogether.ca)

OR

[www.cupe.on.ca](http://www.cupe.on.ca)

