

UNIT 1 BARGAINING BULLETIN #12

University of Toronto Education Workers – CUPE Local 3902

February 05, 2015

It's Not Zero, But We're Not Near a Deal

Employer Won't Discuss Funding

On our first day of bargaining with a mediator present (a process known as [conciliation](#)) the Unit 1 Bargaining Team saw the administration's first financial offers. In response to mounting pressure from our membership, the administration appears to have moved off of their insistence on "net zeroes" and has offered us financial increases without offsets.

Moving off a dubious and irrational position is a good thing. But it means we are only now beginning to discuss compensation inside a normal bargaining frame. Their opening offer was for a wage increase of about \$0.42/hour annually, stating after a one-year base wage freeze in 2014/15, with no increase to funding, no increase to benefit funds, no decrease in the amount of work required toward funding and no tuition relief for unfunded students. On outstanding issues of working conditions (not strictly financial), they accepted none of our major proposals.

While we are willing to negotiate and be flexible on details and amounts, the Unit 1 Bargaining Team reiterated the gains that members have sent us to the table to achieve: real increases (i.e. not \$0.42) to our livelihoods via increases to funding, tuition credits for unfunded members, less required work in the funding package and/or increases to our benefit funds to make expenses like healthcare and childcare more manageable. The University of Toronto has enjoyed surpluses in the hundreds of millions the past two years and is projected to do so again in 2015. In this context, we and our members believe our proposals are reasonable and achievable. The money is there. Our work makes this university run, and we want our share.

We remain 100% committed to negotiating a Collective Agreement without labour action if this is at all possible. We are working very hard to that end. Again responding to pressure from our members and from [undergrads concerned about a strike](#), the administration has offered one additional bargaining day, and we have accepted. This is good, but given the distance we still need to go in these negotiations, the Bargaining Team fears an agreement may not be achieved in the time remaining.

Our dates with the administration are Feb. 17, 20, 25 and 26. With a strike deadline of Feb. 26 in place, after which we would commence a strike on Feb. 27, precious weeks will go by without any bargaining, but there is a lot we can do before then. Those dates will be intense and high-pressure for the Bargaining Team. The more we and the administration hear from members and feel their resolve, the clearer and better those days will go. What we've all been doing seems, we hope, to be working. Whether the administration will be responsive to our continued mobilization remains to be seen. We certainly hope they will be.

We hear from members every day that they are broke and exasperated and ready to strike if that's what we have to do to improve our situations. While we do not wish for a strike, we take that feeling seriously. We ask everyone to remain alert over the coming weeks for any news of bargaining even as we prepare for the possibility of a strike at the end of the month.