

CUPE 503

Membership Update



Dear CUPE 503 Members,

For the last 20 weeks we have been all living in unprecedented times with COVID-19 changing our day to day lives in immeasurable ways. COVID-19 has certainly highlighted the need for continued strong public services to serve the residents in our communities. Living and working in a pandemic has also meant that many projects that were cued to commence in the Spring of 2020, including City of Ottawa Inside/Outside negotiations have been delayed due to Public Health restrictions.

CUPE 503 Office Operations

We will continue to service the membership through remote appointments and meetings as our office operations start to ramp up. Members can make inquiries with our staff by contacting the Local's office main number at 613-230-2456 or by sending an email inquiry to local503@cupe503.com.

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City of Ottawa Inside-Outside Collective Agreement Negotiations

Local 503 and the City have agreed to 22 days commencing September through to mid-December 2020 for negotiations of the Inside/Outside Collective Agreement. On Tuesday, September 8th between 9:00 am and 9:00 pm the Bargaining Committee will be hosting a Ratification Drop In for members to discuss the proposals that have been drafted based on the membership survey results, consultations with our staff and legal team, and priority items as a result of legislative change since our last round of bargaining.

City of Ottawa Part-Time Recreation & Culture, Aquatics and Ottawa Public Library Negotiations

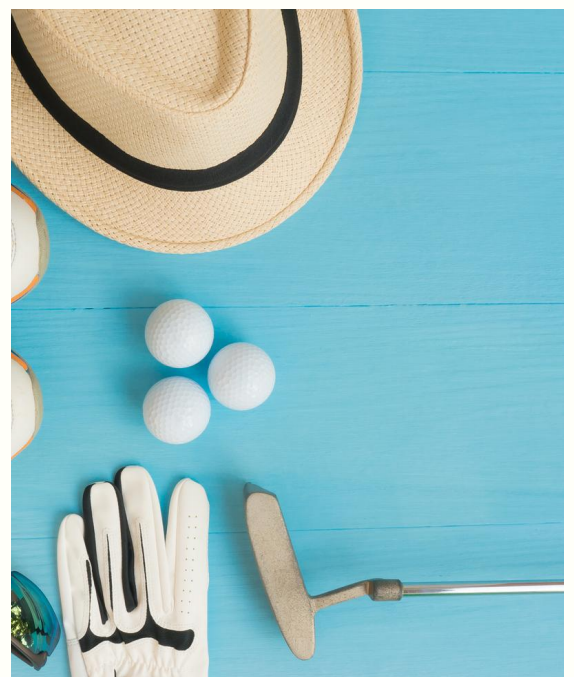
The Local has proposed scheduling dates commencing the Fall of 2020 for these Collective Agreements. We will be conducting surveys of the bargaining units to hear from the members. We will provide an update to membership as soon as we have dates for the release of the surveys.

Forest Hill Long Term Care Home & Embassy West Senior Living Negotiations

Notice to Bargain has been provided to the Employers by the Local, however dates have not yet been set to commence negotiations. Surveys will be sent to the membership to determine priorities for these upcoming rounds.

Cancelled: CUPE 503 Annual Golf Tournament

Our Annual Golf Tournament scheduled for August 2020 has been cancelled. The format of our tournament and dinner proposed significant challenges under Public Health guidelines. We have secured **Thursday, August 19th 2021** for our next tournament.



OMERS Update

CUPE 503 is profoundly disappointed to report to you that the OMERS Sponsor Corporation Board of Directors has voted in favour of eliminating the guaranteed indexing of your pension for service worked after December 31, 2022.

The “Shared Risk indexing” proposal passed. This means that for service worked after December 31, 2022, annual indexing for that portion of your OMERS pension could be reduced or even eliminated. It is especially bad for younger workers or new hires who will have to work most or all their career without getting the guaranteed indexing of their pension in retirement. Plan members who are already retired are not impacted by this change.

Indexing is the annual increase to your pension to keep up with the cost-of-living. Just like your union fights for wage increases, we must also fight for pension increases. Our living standards should improve, not decline. After a lifetime of work, workers expect to have a decent and secure retirement. That means having a pension that increases with the cost-of-living, so we don't get farther and farther behind. Indexing is especially important for workers who don't earn as much as they should. For example, the average pension for a CUPE school board worker after 30 years of service is only about \$15,000/year.

Ending the certainty that your pension will increase by the cost-of-living every year is a major blow to your retirement security. Instead of having that guarantee, it will be left to the Board to decide every year, with no real rules to follow. We will now have to fight every year to pressure the same Board that just eliminated guaranteed indexing to grant full conditional indexing.

A two-thirds vote of the Board was needed for “Shared Risk indexing” to pass. If all the Worker/Retiree Representatives stood united and voted against it, it could have been defeated. Instead, it's clear that some voted with Employers on this proposal. CUPE, OPSEU, ATU, CIPP and several other unions who collectively represent a majority of Plan members were opposed to this proposal. Through CUPE Ontario's defendyouromers.ca website, almost 60,000 e-mails were sent to the Board urging the Representatives to vote no. But the Board of Directors has ignored the voices of unions and Plan members and has eliminated guaranteed indexing in the middle of a global pandemic...

OMERS Update (continued)

Other plan changes were passed. The Board voted in favour of 3 technical changes that make OMERS service buybacks easier for workers on layoff or reduced earnings in light of disruption caused by COVID-19. These changes should have been implemented far sooner, but we believe OMERS decided to package them today with “Shared Risk indexing” in an attempt for a positive spin. The Board also passed an amendment that makes it easier for part-time, casual and contract workers to join OMERS – which CUPE Ontario fully supports. These other plan changes in no way make up for the fact that the Board has passed “Shared Risk indexing”, a major concession for Plan members.

The past 9 months have exposed grave concerns about the leadership of OMERS and the direction the Plan is headed. A concerted effort has been made to distance the Board of Directors from the Sponsor Organizations and Plan members they represent. CUPE Ontario is extremely worried that the Board of Directors and key decision-makers have lost sight of the Plan’s fundamental purpose.

We know this news is difficult during this already incredibly challenging time working and living amid a global pandemic. Members have been rightly focused on keeping our families and communities safe and healthy.

We promise you that our campaign does not end here. CUPE members, the single largest group of members in OMERS, will never stop fighting for the indexing of our pensions. Working with other unions, we will campaign to take back the Plan from those who listen more to the bankers and Bay Street types than Plan members, and make sure OMERS is working in the interest of workers. We will never stop fighting to fix OMERS.

Stay tuned for future actions.

Membership Updates

To receive regular updates from CUPE 503 we encourage all members to provide their PERSONAL email address to the Local. Please contact Heather at hduff@cupe503.com to add your PERSONAL email to our database. More generic updates will continue to be available on our website at www.cupe503.com.

Thank You

We wanted to take this opportunity to thank all CUPE 503 members for your dedication and commitment over the last 5 months to providing services to the public in the most difficult conditions. You have all been front-line heroes and ensured that services continued while our communities were in lock down and gradually re-opened. It has been a challenging time for many and we all understand that COVID-19 will continue to have a long-lasting impact until an effective vaccine is available.

We wish all of our members and their families a safe, healthy and hopeful summer and will provide an update in the Fall of the current work underway.