

THE FACTS

Technical Briefing on the General Legislative Grants for Education in Ontario

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On June 22 CUPE had its technical briefing with ministry of education finance branch officials. This is the annual briefing where we get additional details about the GLGs for education.

As the meeting began we were asked if we wanted to see the prepared slide show or get right to the particular issues. We opted for the latter as we only had an hour of the branch directors time. We had two main issues we wanted cleared up at this meeting: (1) how did the ministry calculate that education spending would increase by \$600 million; and (2) how much of that increase would improve the lot of education support staff?

In response to the first question we were told that you can't really add up individual items that were announced two weeks ago to reach the \$600 million total (as some researcher who will not be named had foolishly tried to do). \$600 million represents the difference between what school boards received last year and what they will receive this year, but there is no breakdown showing where all the new money will go. We did ask for a breakdown and were told the branch would try to provide it, but we haven't heard back from them yet!

We framed the second question like this: our analysis of the funding announcement, which we will relay to CUPE members following this meeting, is that there is virtually nothing in the \$600 million for

support staff. "Convince us that we're wrong," we challenged the finance officials. Well, they did nothing of the sort, and only deepened our conviction that there really is next-to-nothing in this announcement for support workers. What there is, we were told, is a 2.5% wage increase for all staff, and some adjustment of the secretary salary benchmark to reflect actual current salaries. That's it! Nothing to increase EA hours; nothing to discourage boards from contracting out custodial & maintenance work. Nothing for hall monitors or lunchroom supervisors. Etc. Etc.

We made it clear that we think the ministry missed an opportunity to address longstanding support staff funding issues with the GLG announcement for 2006-07. Did no-one notice a strike of 1,000 EAs in London last month, we asked? That showed that CUPE members have had enough of balancing school board budgets on their backs. After bending over backwards last year to appease teachers, this ministry seems to have forgotten that there are other staff groups that have long-standing grievances and issues concerning the funding formula.

Unfortunately, those issues were ignored once again, by a ministry that has paid lip service to support staff issues since this government took power.

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