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Newsletter #1: OSBCU Leadership Bargaining Conference

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Fri, Nov 14, 2025 at 4:26 PM

**OSBCU Leadership Bargaining Conference Newsletter November 2025**

Dear Local Leaders and Members:

Last weekend over 270 school board delegates met at the OSBCU's Leadership Bargaining Conference to debate and vote on your bargaining priorities for the 2026 bargaining year. There were an impressive number of delegates from across Ontario, including local executives, local bargaining committees, Contract Action Teams, and members at large.

These bargaining priorities were chosen by you – the 18,000 OSBCU members who filled out the bargaining survey earlier this year. This summer local leaders were consulted about bargaining priorities again during the OSBCU's Summer Roadshow. And last weekend, the priorities were debated by delegates to the Leadership Bargaining Conference. We are proud to share that your bargaining priorities were approved by a large majority of bargaining units at the close of the conference!

The OSBCU bargaining team now has a strong mandate to go to the table with in 2026.

The Leadership Bargaining Conference included powerful speakers who reminded us why we fight, who we fight for, and how unstoppable we are united and organized. The power of education workers is rising: grounded in purpose, fueled by solidarity, and ready for the year ahead.

Delegates Approve 2026 Bargaining Priorities

Delegates at the Leadership Bargaining Conference completed important work on behalf of all OSBCU members, reviewing, debating, and strengthening the proposals that will guide us into the next round of bargaining. We're proud to share that the 2026 Bargaining Priorities were approved by a supermajority of bargaining units, in accordance with Article 11.1.07 of the OSBCU Bylaws. This marks a critical milestone in our preparation for the fight ahead — one that reflects the voices, experiences, and priorities of OSBCU education workers across Ontario.

The final version of the Bargaining Priorities document is now available to all locals on the OSBCU website.

Bargaining Priorities document in English and French: [FINAL-OSBCU-Bargaining-Priorities-Post-Bargaining-Conference-2025-BIL.pdf](#)

As outlined in Article 11.1.08, locals are reminded to hold informational meetings — with the support of the Bargaining Committee, if requested — to ensure that every member is informed, engaged, and ready to take action depends on our unity in the workplace, and together we're building the power to win!



Powerful Voices, United Purpose

During the conference, inspiring speakers took the stage to remind us of the incredible strength of all 57,000 OSBCU members and the historic work you accomplished in 2022.

Chandra Pasma, ONDP MPP and Education Critic, called out the Ford government and Education Minister Paul Calandra for their continued attacks on public education. She warned that Bill 33, which seeks to limit the power of school board trustees, signals an uphill battle in next year's bargaining. **Laura Walton**, Ontario Federation of Labour President and former OSBCU President, reflected on the power of our collective action in 2022, when education workers defied the notwithstanding clause and sparked a province-wide movement, uniting unions and workers across Ontario. CUPE Ontario President **Fred Hahn** recounted his experience joining OSBCU education workers on the floor of the Ontario Legislature in 2022 when OSBCU stood up to the Ford government and refused to

accept the notwithstanding clause, which attempted to take away your right to strike. Hahn said participating in this action was a highlight of his career! And CUPE Ontario Secretary Treasurer **Yolanda McClean** echoed Hahn in saying that our fight was a historic fight in Ontario and gave the power and confidence to so many other bargaining units to strike for what they deserved. **JP Hornick**, OPSEU/SEFPO President, spoke about how their union and membership was behind OSBCU members 100 percent in 2022, and they'll be right there with us again in 2026. CUPE Secretary Treasurer **Candace Rennick** echoed previous speakers in saying that CUPE National will support our bargaining in any way they can. Lastly, Mark Hancock gave a quick address to floor and highlighted that CUPE's 800,000 members will stand side by side with OSBCU locals and members next year –we have the power and strength of CUPE!

School board presidents currently in bargaining also gave recaps of what is happening at their tables.

Cynthia Steeves, President of CUPE Local 2357, representing 3,200 members at the Ottawa Catholic District School Board, shared an update on bargaining for EarlyON workers. Despite delays and resistance from the Employer, she emphasized her members' determination to keep pushing forward.

And **Corry Allair**, President of CUPE 5569, representing over 420 members at the Sudbury Catholic District School Board, shared her local's powerful journey of unionizing. Despite threats, intimidation, and the Employer's horrible behaviour, workers stood together with support from CUPE National and the OSBCU to win certification with in 2024. Now in bargaining, Local 5569 faces aggressive concession demands by the Employer, but members are stronger and more united than ever — organizing Purple Shirt Wednesdays, circulating internal petitions, and growing their members' involvement with the local day by day. Corry highlighted the transformation of members into confident leaders and affirmed that through collective strength and determination, the local *will* win a fair deal.

OSBCU President Joe Tigani closed with a rallying message, urging locals to continue organizing their members, strengthening member networks and building community support. As we look toward 2026, we must continue to build our strength, unity, and determination. With new organizers, expanded local capacity, and growing collaboration across the sector, Tigani made one message clear: when OSBCU members stand united, nothing can stop us from winning the gains we deserve.

You can view and download photos of the Leadership Bargaining Conference by accessing this Google Drive folder: [2025 Leadership Bargaining Conference](#)



Building Power to Win: The OSBCU Organizing Plan

On day two of the conference, the OSBCU's Secretary Treasurer and Lead Mobilizer Christa Rioux along with OSBCU Mobilization Officers Laurie Penner and Ginette Poulin, Member Organizer Kristen Cox, and Local 218 President Carrie Boisvert, gave a presentation on the OSBCU's organizing plan.

The OSBCU's organizing plan was developed through a deep, strategic process that began in August 2024. Using a Forcefield Analysis, the Executive identified the forces working for and against education workers—everything from Ford's third-term majority and chronic underfunding to the strength of our solidarity and experience gained from 2022. This analysis, shared with local leaders across Ontario, helped shape a roadmap for winning real improvements in both central and local bargaining.

Since spring 2024, Phase 1 of the plan has focused on building local Contract Action Teams—networks of workplace leaders ready to mobilize members, lead conversations, and build visible union strength in every school board. Over 25 member organizers are now supporting locals across the province, helping to recruit site leads, train mobilizers, strengthen communication, and engage parents and communities in the fight for well-funded, safe schools.

As we move into Phase 2, OSBCU will ramp up province-wide collective action to pressure employers, trustees, and the Ford government. Locals will lead workplace and community campaigns — including a strike readiness pledge and visible actions like Purple Wednesdays — to demonstrate member unity and strength. The work done today will lay the foundation for Phase 3: full mobilization and, if necessary, strike preparation to secure the fair contracts, staffing, and respect education workers deserve at the bargaining table in 2026.



OSBCU Launches Violence Prevention Campaign

The OSBCU Health and Safety team, comprised of Roger Regular and Mechelle O'Hagan, presented their continued work on the Shine a Light campaign, a province-wide effort to confront the escalating violence faced by education workers. The campaign includes weekly member video testimonials and a series of new resources, including guides on reporting violence, work refusals and safety plans. These materials will be released through 2025 and early 2026.

All campaign tools and updates will be hosted on the [OSBCU website](#) and the [Shine a Light campaign website](#), where members can access resources, register for updates, and download flyers to share across worksites.

The campaign also ties directly into the OSBCU's bargaining strategy for Occupational Health and Safety, calling for stronger contract language, improved staffing and employer accountability to prevent violence and protect workers. Locals are reviewing existing collective agreement language and identifying specific safety gaps to address during upcoming negotiations in 2026.

The Three Phases of the OSBCU's Organizing Plan

At the Leadership Bargaining Conference the OSBCU Executive presented the mobilization plan in three phases:

Phase 1: Building Local Contract Action Teams (Jan–Nov 2025)

Most locals have now established worksite leadership structures, recruiting local mobilizers and site leads supported by a team of OSBCU member organizers across the province. Site leads are engaging co-workers in conversations about bargaining priorities, what it will take to win, and tracking member support to build power from the ground up.

Phase 2: Province-Wide Collective Action (Now–March 2026)

Locals are being encouraged to work with their workplace leadership networks to have every member sign a strike pledge to strike if necessary, with a goal of reaching 65% participation by March in preparation for the possibility of early bargaining. The "Resist Cuts, Reclaim Schools" strike pledge (available with posters for union bulletin boards) is

an organizing tool to spark conversations about bargaining priorities and member power. Once a strong majority of members have signed the pledge, please contact your staff representative and member organizer to develop an action plan — whether that means presenting the pledge to your employer, collaborating with Communications (Shannon Carranco) to create a bulletin board poster featuring all signatures, or delivering the signed pledge to your local PC MPP or school board trustees.

[Link to Strike Pledge](#)

[Link to Strike Pledge Poster for Workplace Bulletin Boards](#)

Phase 3: Preparation to Strike and Continued Mobilization (March 2026–Ratification)

This phase ramps up political and workplace action to maintain pressure on employers, trustees, the Minister of Education, and Premier Ford. Activities will include delivering strike pledges, coordinated call-in campaigns, door-to-door canvassing, parent outreach to form education worker-parent committees, and joint actions with other education unions and labour councils — all building toward full readiness to strike if necessary.

Timeline: Next Steps and Key Dates

- **November – December 2025:** Locals are asked to share their bargaining proposals with the sector team for review. The sector team will identify any proposals that might be within the scope of central bargaining. This is for advice only. Locals may still table the proposals flagged as within the scope of central bargaining. However, it is possible that those proposals will need to be withdrawn if the employer submits a central/local split dispute. Each bargaining unit is required to submit their local bargaining proposals through their assigned National Servicing Representative by December 23, 2025.
- **November – December 2025:** CUPE-OSBCU bargaining committee works on central bargaining proposals.
- **November 2025 – March 2026:** Phase Two of OSBCU strategic plan to build power to win in bargaining. (Province wide collective action: Ready to strike).
- **January 2026 – March 2026:** Finalize all bargaining proposals and preparations for negotiations.
- **March 2026:** Earliest possible Notice to Bargain. When notice to bargain is issued centrally, it is also issued for all 112 CUPE school board bargaining units locally. CUPE-OSBCU will meet with the Crown and CTA within 15 days of Notice to Bargain to negotiate the scope of central bargaining. Once scope of central bargaining is determined, CUPE-OSBCU and all locals will start bargaining. It is recommended that locals negotiate concurrently with CUPE-OSBCU to maximize power.

- **March 2026 – September/October 2026:** Phase Three of the OSBCU Executive's strategic plan to build power to win in bargaining (strike preparation and strike votes).

A heartfelt thank you to every delegate, leader, and member who joined us at this year's Leadership Bargaining Conference. Together, we've approved our 2026 bargaining priorities, strengthened our organizing plan, and recommitted to building the power needed to win real improvements for every OSBCU member.

The year ahead will bring challenges, but it will also bring the unstoppable strength of 57,000 education workers standing together. The power of purple is stronger than ever and we're just getting started!

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