



Issue # 11

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Taking stock of where we are at

This round of bargaining has been very hard on everybody's nerves. And it's no wonder - we were shoved into a provincial bargaining arrangement which has kept both Toronto Education Workers/Local 4400 Members and its leaders pretty far from the bargaining process. It is a very different reality than what we experienced in years gone by.

The reports we hear about what's happening in negotiations are all verbal - nothing in writing so far. This can understandably cause people to throw up their hands and start second guessing the fight we have been waging.

At a time like this, it is really important to review everything we have been through. We cannot just pick and choose what we take into account. At each step of the way we have had to make decisions - even when we didn't have as much information as we should have.

So here are a few things to keep in mind:

- So far, we have been on strike for only 2 days. Sometimes strikes go on for weeks before there is any progress.
- It was not a mistake to go on strike. We had no choice but to fight Ford's strips from our Collective Agreement - his attack on the sick plan and benefits for example.
- We even had to take on Ford's "nuclear option" which imposed all his changes on us - with no member vote and zero opportunity to appeal through the courts.
- Just the defeat of his imposed settlement was worth the effort on our part. Beating off attacks isn't always satisfying until you stop to consider what would have happened if the attacker had won!
- By defeating Bill 28, we not only saved ourselves from serious losses, we strengthened the rights of millions of Canadians.
- What about the wage issue? For better or worse our expectations were very high. At this moment (November 18) we are not yet finished on the money. What we know for sure is this, we are ahead of where we would have been if we didn't strike. And, when the final numbers come out, don't make the mistake of just calculating what the raise will be worth over the next four years. It's not going to be a lump sum, one-time, raise. It will put money in our pockets for as long as we work for Bloorview, TCDSB, TDSB and Viamonde.
- Although rumours are swirling, we still do not know what will be in the tentative agreement on a number of important issues such as staffing and job security. There is a lot at stake with these issues and Local 4400 leaders have made this clear from the beginning.

So, what are the takeaways from all this?

1) By sticking together and showing a lot of courage we have accomplished a lot - more than many onlookers thought possible.

2) *To stay strong for local bargaining and for whatever else we will face going forward, we have got to stay united right through to the end of this process.*



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