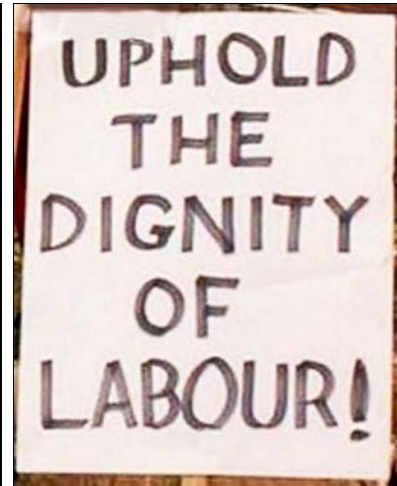
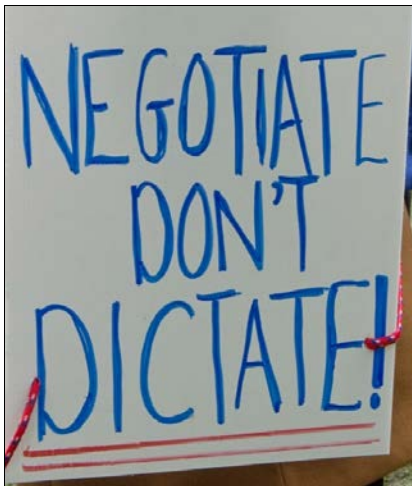


July 28, 2023 - No. 41

Salt Workers Courageously Reject Tentative Agreement
Stand as One with Windsor Salt Workers!
Negotiate Don't Dictate!

– Empower Yourself Now –



- **Education Workers Visit Picket Lines**

Video

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On July 26, miners in the Windsor Salt Ojibway Mine complex in Windsor, Ontario voted to reject a tentative agreement between their bargaining committee and the employer that they were presented with. The miners' bargaining unit was the first of three units to be given the agreement pertaining to their unit at a ratification meeting. After considering it line-by-line a strong majority rejected it. After the rejection by the miners, as a show of solidarity, both Unifor Locals 1959 and 240 paused their presentation of the tentative agreements and votes for the two other bargaining

units -- one representing production workers at the evaporation plant, and the other clerical and lab workers at both the mine and evaporation plant. The three bargaining units have individual tentative agreements but also bargain together as a master bargaining committee. Speaking to the media after the rejection vote, Unifor Local 240 President Jodi Nesbitt said that "the solidarity in the room amongst the workers was crystal clear."



Rally in support of striking Windsor Salt Workers, June 29, 2023

Some of the most significant parts of the tentative agreement which the miners could not accept were:

- The elimination of seniority as a criterion for determining how jobs are assigned each day.
- Changes to job classifications which go around seniority
- A significant reduction in union time and the doubling of the minimum time within which management must ensure a worker can see a union representative in the mine when issues arise.
- A delay of almost three weeks for the re-start of production during which time the company would have been permitted to use contract labour as it saw fit while workers waited to come back to work.
- A refusal by the company to agree that it would not seek reprisals against any members for activities on the picket line. Given the company's 24-hour surveillance of the picket line, and who knows what else, the workers know that without such a guarantee no one would be safe from persecution or arbitrary firing upon a return to work.

One worker who spoke to Empower Yourself Now after the vote said: "This vote put to bed the collective unknown as to why we were staying out. Now we know why. We are confident it's worth it and we understand. No one could have accepted this deal."

Empower Yourself Now congratulates the mine workers on having the courage of their convictions to reject a tentative agreement that was unacceptable to them. We also congratulate Unifor Locals 1959 and 240 on pausing the votes for the other two bargaining units so that the workers would have time to consider how to maintain their unity and support one another, given the fact that they are three different bargaining units with three different tentative agreements. We are confident that, as they have since day one of this strike through discussion and deliberation, the workers, with the vast community support they have, will find the ways to continue to stand as one in the face of new attempts by the company, media and government to divide them.

The *No* vote is a new starting point for the struggle as it once again shows the company that these workers will not be blackmailed, extorted or intimidated and that their *No* to union-busting and

attacks on the standards they and past generations have given rise to means *No!* They are showing that they did not go on strike for five months out of desperation. They did it in order to affirm their rights and the company needs to get that through its head. They are a mature and united force that will not be divided. The company must change its ways, respect the workers and their union and negotiate rather than dictate, or sell the operation to someone who will.

The just stand taken by the Windsor Salt workers to reject the company's blackmail and union-busting is also a credit to the broad support from the community and financial and other support from workers across Canada and Quebec, to ensure that the Windsor workers did not have to act out of desperation, and could take the required stand to defend their interests, that of their community and that of workers as a whole.



The stand to uphold their *No!* is a courageous one which shows that the Canadian working class is capable of thinking for itself and defining what is and isn't in its own interests. It is of the utmost importance now that the company's new attempts to paint the workers as intransigent are defeated. The company is 100 per cent to blame for the breakdown of negotiations and the lack of trust the workers have in the new owners. Its single-minded attack on the union's ability to function and on seniority, its dirty tricks before the strike and day-in and day-out during the strike, have all shown the workers that they cannot trust the company to uphold even the most basic standards of civilized conduct, which means they cannot be trusted with the workers' health and safety either.



The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) should take decisive action. With the union-busting measures in the tentative agreement it is more than clear that this company is out to break the union in a variety of ways and uses dirty tricks, manipulation, extortion and generally dishonourable tactics to try to divide and provoke the workers on the picket line. This is not good faith bargaining. This is extortion. It is also in contempt of the hereditary rights of at least one First Nation on whose lands it operates a mine.[1]

Union-busting and ignoring the rights of Indigenous Peoples are not consistent with the values of the shareholders of the plan -- Ontario's teachers -- and the OTPP should not continue financing and overseeing such unethical activities with its seat on Stone Canyon's Board of Managers. Enough is enough. By divesting from Stone Canyon Industries Holdings Inc. the OTPP can contribute to making it clear that Canadian teachers' pensions will not be used to try to destroy other Canadian workers' unions and livelihoods and block the extraction of critical Canadian resources. If it does not divest, the Pension Plan will be in flagrant contempt of its shareholders' values and wishes as expressed on numerous occasions by the presidents of the teachers' unions in Ontario.[2]

Municipal, provincial and federal governments must stop standing by and permitting Canada's critical resources like salt to be locked in the ground by a foreign company which provoked a strike in order to extort concessions from the workers. Elected representatives should speak up loud and clear to call on the company to negotiate not dictate or sell to someone who can negotiate a deal acceptable to the workers. Their silence and claims to be neutral are not acceptable to those who

have put them in office. When it comes to nation-wrecking and union-busting, if elected officials and governments do not speak out they are in contempt of what their constituents consider their duty.

Notes

1. "First Nations' Concerns About Windsor Salt's Mining Leases on Their Lands," *Workers' Forum*, July 17, 2023.
2. "A Significant Demand from all Ontario Teachers' Unions to Their Pension Fund," *Workers' Forum*, June 28, 2023.



Education Workers Visit Picket Lines



On July 25, the President of CUPE's Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU), Laura Walton, joined striking salt workers' picket lines to show the Council's support. She was joined by Rod McGee, First Vice-President, Joe Tigani, Area 1 Vice-President and Michel Gagnon, Francophone Mobilization Officer as well as elected representatives and grassroots members from CUPE education workers from Windsor-Essex locals 1348 and 1358.

At the picket lines workers shared their experiences during the strike and their concerns as they prepared for a vote the next day on a tentative agreement. A number of the salt workers have spouses who are education workers represented by OSBCU, which in November 2022 held political action days in defiance of the Ontario government's use of the notwithstanding clause of the Constitution to impose a contract on its members. The visit expressed the unity of education workers with all those who are fighting for their rights and the interests of their communities.



Video

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Website: www.cpcml.ca Email: editor@cpcml.ca