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HAS A DEAL BEEN REACHED?

CLRCS/OPSEU 472

CLRCS's website says that an *"award"* has been issued, and claiming that the strike action by OPSEU Local 472 is at an end. Over on OPSEU 472's Facebook page, people are congratulating themselves and thanking their negotiators for "standing up for them." On OPSEU's main website, there's no mention of a settlement at all.

So what to make of all of this?

At first blush, I'm happy and relieved, especially for the clients and their families. While some have indicated they've survived the strike just fine, most of the people I talked to took the opposite view, that their children, and by extension themselves, have gone through hell. So, as far as I'm concerned, anything that gives these people some relief finally after fifteen weeks must be a good thing, right?

I'm happy for the workers who had to establish and walk those pickets for coming up on four months. Nobody likes being on strike as it makes a person vulnerable to all sorts of pressures, both personal and financial. I've not seen the terms of this so-called deal, and I understand bargaining contains its fair-share of give and take, so it'll be interesting how much *"give"* was necessary to achieve the *"take."* It would also be good to know what was given up, if anything, to secure a deal that seemed nigh on impossible to settle mere days ago.

I'm sure the strike has been more than just a simple headache for management, especially as personalized as it was at times with respect to the Executive-Director. I suppose when you see your name on a sign or online it can get personal. Also, I'm sure there would have to be all kinds of organizational juggling going on in order to keep the ship afloat these past many weeks. So I have to assume that this "award" will bring some degree of satisfaction to the CLRCS politburo.

What a strange word to use, award.

Almost as if somebody won something, when almost certainly nobody did. Also, the word "award" suggests a *"giver"* and a *"recipient."* Sounds a little one-sided for a labour negotiation. Unless the word award is being used to represent the total capitulation of CLRCS to the the union's demands, something I don't think happened for one second.

No proper assessment can be made of this until the details of the settlement, and by extension, contract are made available. Currently, my only sources of information remain the online platforms of the two parties.

I found out about this award when a friend sent me a text with the *myFM Facebook* page announcing that the strike had ended. It's funny how myFM's Kasey Egan beat me to the punch on the story scoop this morning, he of the 75 word articles on a local radio station's online portal. Whereas a guy like me, cranking out daily articles of 1500+ words, has to get his news from somebody who writes complete articles that maybe approach the length of one of my introductory paragraphs.

This labour news offers hope I suppose.

First, if true, it brings a very visible strike to an end, and that's supposed to be something that benefits everyone. But as I said, the devil will be in the details.

It's possible that strike fatigue can make any kind of settlement sound fantastic. But then as the details roll out, and a person sees the bottom line, and pictures themselves living within the conditions of the settlement, that initial euphoria may be tainted by the sour taste of possible un-met demands or outright surrenders.

I'm certainly hoping that CLRCS's use of the word "award" doesn't mean that the agency is gifting the union with basically a *"take it or leave it"* scenario, something that pretty much happened in Brockville. But I can't imagine this to be the case, mostly because of what appears to be positive traffic on Local 472's Facebook page.

But again, while relieved, I'm not running out to pick up balloons and noisemakers.

I want to see what makes this award an award first. Then I'll truly know what to think.

A Message to Our Community

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Community Living Renfrew County South and OPSEU/SEFPO Local 472 are pleased to share that an award has been issued, ending the strike.

Both parties remained focused on the continuity of care for supported individuals.

We recognize the impact this has had on our community, and we are grateful for the patience and understanding shown to us throughout.

The path forward is one of reconciliation and renewed strength. Community Living Renfrew County South is driven by a commitment to those we serve, and to the employees who make that care possible.

As we return to full-service delivery, we do so with appreciation for a community that continues to stand with us.

Thank you for your continued trust and support.