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May 19, 2017 **Sent this day via email**

Dear members of the Board of Management of the Toronto Zoo,

RE: CUPE LOCAL 1600 – TORONTO ZOO STRIKE UPDATE

We are writing to update you regarding the status of collective bargaining between CUPE Local 1600 and the Toronto Zoo.

Since strike action began last week, there has been no contact between the parties until yesterday afternoon. At the request of the mediator, the parties met yesterday and exchanged proposals.

While some progress was made, the parties adjourned shortly after CUPE Local 1600 presented a proposal to settle the outstanding issues. We continue to await a substantive reply to that proposal.

The current impasse the parties face stems, in the union's view, from the Zoo's insistence on linking any movement to address the union's position on Appendix D (the '150 clause') as requiring Local 1600's acceptance of substantial concessions to the existing contracting out language (5.01).

When bargaining broke for the evening last night, the union had proposed contracting out language that covered members with a start date of four or more years — with redeployment language.

This represents significant movement on the part of the Union, and is a departure from the status quo we had originally sought. To be clear—the union moved on this issue in an effort to bring the parties to agreement. No reasonable individual could look at either our original or subsequent proposals and construe them as an 'enhancement'.

The Zoo's insistence, on weakening either the 150 clause or 5.01, raises serious concerns for both Local 1600's leadership and membership. The status quo we sought to maintain has served both parties well for the past 20 years. Throughout bargaining, we have moved to address the issues the employer has raised when they have provided a compelling rationale. On job security and contracting out language, the Zoo has declined to articulate their rationale for the changes they seek. We cannot help but wonder as to the motivation for seeking such profound changes.

It is CUPE Local 1600's belief that an agreement can be reached, provided the two parties continue to negotiate. In our opinion, the parties are 95 per cent of the way to an agreement. Failure to reach agreement on the outstanding five per cent is, in our opinion, detrimental to all parties, not least of all the 5,000 animals that depend on quality care by a skilled and fully staffed workforce.

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We sincerely hope that the Toronto Zoo Board of Management today provides its negotiating team with the flexibility in their mandate—*in particular with respect to the issues of employment security (150 Clause) and contracting out language (5.01)* to enable productive negotiations between the parties and maintain needed staffing at the Zoo.

An agreement is tantalizingly close. Were the parties to return to the bargaining table today with renewed mandate following your meeting, we believe it is entirely possible to conclude bargaining and have our members back on the job in less than 48 hours. Our bargaining team is available both this afternoon and, if necessary, through the weekend to finish the job of negotiating a collective agreement all parties can live with.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have. Additionally, Nancy Murphy, CUPE National Representative, is available to respond to any queries. Should you wish, please feel free to contact us at your earliest convenience.

Yours truly,

Christine McKenzie
President, CUPE Local 1600

Fred Hahn
President, CUPE Ontario

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