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CUPE files bad faith bargaining complaint against Lincoln County Humane Society

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), representing striking animal welfare workers, has filed a bad faith bargaining complaint against Lincoln County Humane Society with the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB), charging that the workers' employer violated s. 17 of the *Ontario Labour Relations Act, 1995*.

"We have filed a bad faith bargaining complaint against Lincoln County Humane Society," said Dean Mainville, CUPE National Representative. "Since November, this employer has come back to the bargaining table with progressively worse proposals – designed to first provoke workers to go out on strike and then make the workers stay out on strike – that's why the workers have been on the picket lines for over two months."

On November 4, 2011, the employer proposed a four-year contract with modest wage increases and no other changes to the existing collective agreement. Since this proposal, subsequent proposals made by the employer became progressively worse – all unacceptable and unjustifiable proposals designed for rejection by the workers, including:

- a proposal on January 11, 2012, which included a 20% wage cut, reduced benefits and job security for new employees, with no economic justification for the proposed drastic cuts that would create a two-tier workplace
- at a mediation meeting on February 21, the employer demanded the union withdraw all outstanding grievances, which had no bearing on the contract talks
- to fight management's attempt to create a two-tier workplace, the workers went out on strike on February 24, 2012
- since the strike, management came back to the bargaining table with even worse demands than the ones that put the workers on strike; these new demands include all workers taking cutbacks of 25% in benefits and, in the last round of bargaining on April 25, the employer advised that it was intending to eliminate all full-time positions within the bargaining unit

"Management first said they incurred deficits every year; this was not accurate; then they said donations and revenue were decreasing and we again showed that this claim was not correct; we asked for the shelter's latest financial statements, which they flatly refused to provide," continued Mainville. "There is no rationale provided by the employer for their positions. We believe that the spay/neuter clinic took all the resources away from the main operations of the shelter and now management is trying to balance the shelter's books on the backs of the workers. Management made the decisions to build and operate the clinic that is only open one day a week and now they expect front line workers to pay for their costly decisions."

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