

Library union files for conciliation

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Maureen O'Reilly, president of Toronto Public Library Workers Union Local 4948, announced the union was filing for conciliation — the next step in negotiations before a “No Board” report and a legal strike position.

TORONTO - Toronto's library workers started a new chapter in this round of labour negotiations Friday.

Maureen O'Reilly, president of Toronto Public Library Workers Union Local 4948, announced the union was filing for conciliation — the next step in negotiations before a “No Board” report and a legal strike position.

O'Reilly claimed the library board, which negotiates the contract with the union, was waiting for the city to hammer out concessions from CUPE Local 416 and then would force similar concessions on her workers. Local 416 workers are days away from being in a legal strike or lockout position.

“They are isolating one group of workers in order to move to easily tear up their collective agreement and then the other collective agreements including the library workers,” O'Reilly told reporters Friday.

“The city is going to attack 416, rip all these sorts of concessions from them and deliver it to us on a silver platter, our workers cannot bear that kind of treatment.”

She said negotiators are asking library workers for the same concessions being sought at the city negotiating table.

“There is an attack on our job security, there is an attack on our benefits, there is an attack on the quality of jobs and professionalism of library service,” she said.

“They are looking to introduce more volunteers in the Toronto Public Library and push the work down onto minimum wage workers.”

Library board chairman Paul Ainslie was surprised by the union's move.

“If they get a conciliator fine but it is not like we walked away from the table,” Ainslie said.

The two sides have met six or seven times in the last two weeks and have four full days scheduled for next week.

“I don’t know what they are going to conciliate about,” he said.

Ainslie declined to discuss what the library board is targeting in negotiations.

“I’m sure from our side we want the best value for our dollar,” he said.

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