

Dear Parents and Guardians,

CUPE Education Support Workers are on strike in 9 Alberta school divisions with many others across the province moving toward strike readiness. CUPE Education Support Workers include Education Assistants, Therapy Assistants, Custodial and Maintenance Workers, Administrative Staff, Library Technicians, Speech Pathologists and other integral support positions.

Education Support Workers have been on the front lines, seeing the impacts of underfunding on student success and classroom conditions. Due to provincial education funding not keeping up with student enrolment growth, Alberta students are now the lowest funded in the country. The consequences of these shortfalls are getting worse. Trying to support more students, with complex needs, in fewer hours has led to students falling through the cracks.

The impasse in collective bargaining for these workers has been caused by the provincial government imposing **wage mandates** that are capping how much school divisions can propose in monetary compensation. School divisions are forced to comply with the wage mandates or face penalties from the province.

The province's mandated wage rates for education support workers are far below inflation and do not address how much wages in the sector have fallen behind over the last decade.

Stagnant wages are causing staff shortages in schools, leading to burnout for workers trying to fill the gaps. This makes it more difficult to retain and recruit the support staff students need.

Hundreds of current support positions are going unfilled due to low wages and high workloads with little hope of filling them.

Strikes are meant to have an impact to put enough pressure on the employer to get back to bargaining to negotiate a fair agreement. The operation of schools is affected. Many students who require additional support have been told to stay home. Education support workers on strike recognize how very difficult the situation is for students and their caregivers. This has been an extremely difficult decision for support staff who want to settle a fair contract quickly and be back at work with their students.

Education support workers in Alberta typically earn an average of \$34,500 with those in the educational assistant job classification earning on average \$26,388. Strike pay for workers on a picket line are set by their union's constitution, voted on by the membership. For CUPE members this is \$350 per week. **Education support workers say they can't afford to strike, but they can't afford not to.** They are trying to help fix the erosion of public education support services in our province. They are standing strong for fair wages and working conditions so that quality public education can be strong and sustainable for years to come for all Alberta students. Being on strike is very difficult physically, emotionally, and financially.

What Can You Do?

Albertans know that decent wages and working conditions are key to retaining the support staff our students need to attend school and to succeed in their classroom. Albertans know the province can and should be properly funding public education. Support from parents is needed to help put pressure on the provincial government to do what's right to ensure quality public education and specialized support can continue to be available for all students across the province.



1. Go to SupportEducationWorkers.ca

- Sign the [letter action](#)
- Use the [action kit](#)
- [Share a story](#) or message of support

2. Visit a picket line.

[CUPE picket line locations across the province can be found at this link](#)

3. Make a donation to striking workers.

Gift cards, food items, or cash can be donated directly to education workers you know or centrally to the local union to distribute to picket pantries. You can search the CUPE Local's number online for contact information or email abcampaigns@cupe.ca

This strike is a crucial moment in the fight for fair treatment and recognition of the hard work done by education support staff. Parents and parent councils have the power to influence the outcome by showing up and making their voices heard. By standing in solidarity with CUPE workers and Albertans across the province who care about public education, you are helping to improve conditions for support staff and secure a better learning environment for all students.

Please know that anyone who goes into a workplace to perform the regular duties of a striking worker is prolonging the strike and should be discouraged from doing so. If you know of someone "crossing the picket line" (called "scabbing") please discourage them from doing the work of education support staff because it undermines the purpose of the strike and makes it more difficult to end. It also puts students at risk of having inexperienced, untrained workers who may lack proper credentials and clearances in their schools.

Thank you for your support and your understanding.