

**DATE:** June 24, 2014

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Response to Staff Group Budget Presentations

**ORIGINATOR:** David Fraser, Executive Director, Corporate Services

**RESOURCE**

**STAFF:** Kent Pharis

**REFERENCE:** [Board Meeting #10](#) – April 10, 2014 Staff Group Presentations  
Exempt Staff, Edmonton Public Teachers, CUPE Local 3550  
[Board Meeting #12](#) – May 6, 2014 Staff Group Presentation  
CUPE Local 474 and CUPE Local 784

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#### **ISSUE**

The Edmonton Public School Board in its role as employer has committed to providing a response from the Board of Trustees (the Board) and Administration (Superintendent of Schools and District Support Team) to the presentations by staff groups regarding the 2014-15 budget.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Presentations regarding the 2014-15 budget were made to the Board on April 10, 2014, by Exempt Staff (Attachment I), Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) representing teachers (Attachment II), and CUPE Local 3550 representing support staff (Attachment III). Presentations were made on May 6, 2014 by CUPE Local 474 representing custodial staff (Attachment IV) and CUPE Local 784 representing maintenance staff (Attachment V).

#### **CURRENT SITUATION**

As in previous years, there were common themes in the presentations regarding specific issues. Each staff group also identified matters of particular concern for their individual Local.

The first of the common themes again relates to ongoing implications relative to provincial funding for the District. The lack of adequate, stable and sustained funding over the past ten years have impacted our ability to cover all costs in our collective agreements. To ensure prudent financial planning during the 2013 – 2014 school year the District froze surpluses from all schools and Decision Units (DUs) for part of the year. This was done as part of an effort to begin to re-establish an operational reserve fund which had been depleted as a result of the repeated shortfalls in funding from the Province. As a result the current school year has been challenging as a significant number of positions had to be eliminated from all staff groups in an effort to maintain balanced budgets.

The 2014-2015 budget will continue to present significant challenges to schools and central departments across the District. As DU Administrators work to gather feedback from stakeholders, they will continue to be faced with difficult decisions on how best to organize for the coming school year.

We value the contributions of all our staff. This is reflected in the District's cornerstone values of integrity, equity, collaboration and accountability. In Edmonton Public Schools, our collective focus is on student achievement and we work together to create a culture of continuous improvement. It is important that we maintain this focus on supporting the process of teaching and learning as we navigate through these challenging times. As an employer, we are committed to our incredible staff as they all play an important role in our District, contributing to the success of our students. Our challenge is to balance the interests of our students, the interests of our staff groups, and the fiscal realities faced by our District.

The Board continues to lobby for adequate, stable and sustained funding that at least addresses the rate of inflation. The Board is disappointed the provincial government has not followed through on its commitment in this area. Lobbying efforts will continue to be a primary objective of its advocacy committee and all trustees.

Again this year, a second commonality in the briefs is the need for on-going district support for professional development for all employees. Professional development is a critical aspect of our District Strategic Plan to support successful outcomes for students and build staff capacity, which will help to ensure effective succession planning into the future. The District remains committed to continuing the work in the area of staff development to ensure the availability of appropriate learning opportunities for all employees. The District expects that there will be increased professional development opportunities for all staff groups as a result of the Calendar Pilot Project.

Last year, the District and staff groups shared a focus on the need to promote good health and well-being. In an effort to create healthier workplaces and to encourage staff to improve their health and fitness levels, the District launched the Healthy Living pilot project. This collaborative effort delivered by Edmonton Public Schools and the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) was supported by the ATA and the three CUPE Locals. As a result of the success of the pilot project the District and ASEBP have implemented the initial steps of providing all staff groups across the District with the opportunity to participate in the program.

The Board commends and thanks the staff groups for their interest in working collaboratively with Trustees and the Administration on the many issues identified. It recognizes the important work accomplished through joint committees and the provision of input by the staff groups. The following sections outline the Board and Administration responses to the individual presentations, in order of presentation.

#### Exempt Staff

The Board acknowledges the varied and valuable service provided by the exempt staff, and is aware that it is through this group's diversity that the intricate, unique and essential service needs of the District can be fully achieved.

The Board recognizes that exempt staff in central services provide essential core services to support schools and overall district operations. Given the current financial challenges, the previous Board voted to defer the 2.25 per cent salary increase until September 2015. The Board acknowledges the impact of the delayed increase on personal financial situations. As indicated in the presentation by the exempt staff group, the delayed salary increase allowed the

Administration to retain a number of exempt staff positions, thereby limiting the full impact of budget reductions on exempt workloads.

The revised Exempt Classification System is expected to be implemented in January of 2015. Our revised system will help to ensure that exempt staff are compensated fairly and appropriately according to the duties of their position. The Board appreciates the efforts of our exempt staff who are serving on the advisory committee. Although much work still needs to be completed, the Board and Administration are pleased with the progress.

The Administration remains committed to reviewing the hours of work for 10-month exempt staff, implementation of a professional improvement fund and a review of leave entitlements.

The Board and the Administration recognize the need for the District to be viewed as an employer of choice. The shifting demographic of all of our staff groups which includes a transition from our Baby Boomers and Generation X to Millennials and Generation Z will need to be considered as we work to ensure that the District continues to be an employer of choice.

The Board thanks exempt staff for their diverse and valuable work throughout the District. The efforts that exempt staff make to contribute to transforming learners of today into leaders of tomorrow is greatly appreciated.

#### Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 of the ATA

The Board appreciates and values the relationship between Edmonton Public Teacher's Local 37 of the ATA (the Local) and the District. The collaborative manner in which the Administration and the Local approach a number of initiatives continues to support student success in Edmonton Public Schools.

In its presentation, the Local made reference to the impact that insufficient funding from the Province has on class size and the District's ability to support and strengthen inclusive education practices. The Administration has taken steps to provide increased levels of support to teachers relative to large class sizes and improved inclusive practice. This will be addressed through the adjusted focus on support teams that will work with the Assistant Superintendents and schools in their respective leadership groups and catchment areas. Each Assistant Superintendent will have an expanded inclusive education team that will provide support to staff and students. The revised district calendar will also provide increased opportunities to support all staff who are dealing with the challenge of increased class sizes and improved practice relative to inclusive education.

The Local also referenced concerns that teachers in some schools have not been consulted as part of the budget planning process. The Board and the Local have invested many years of collaboration time into the development of practices and processes that support the site based decision making model. The Administration and the Board remain committed to the belief that the development of a comprehensive school budget requires input from all stakeholders. This would include staff, students and parents who are part of the school community.

Work-life balance continues to be a concern for the Local. The Board and the Administration appreciates the participation of teachers in all schools who provided input to the C2 Committee. It is important for the Local and the Administration to continue to work collaboratively to

address teacher workload in an effort to improve teacher efficacy. The input received from teachers will be analyzed and prioritized by the Administration to determine appropriate next steps.

The Board appreciates the Local's commitment to working collaboratively to resolve issues and to nurturing a relationship based on trust and respect. We extend our appreciation to all teachers across the District for their hard work to ensure successful outcomes for the students in Edmonton Public Schools.

#### Local 3550 (Support Staff)

The Board acknowledges and values the important contribution that support staff make to Edmonton Public Schools through their work in offices, classrooms, cafeterias, libraries and labs.

The Board appreciates the collaborative efforts of CUPE Local 3550 Support Staff (Local 3550) through a number of joint committees that are working towards enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of district operations. The work of the Joint Violence in the Workplace Committee to examine ways to reduce injuries in the workplace provides an excellent example of your valued contributions to district operations. This work is important in helping the District provide safe and positive learning environments for our staff and students.

The current school year has been a challenging financial time for the District. Local 3550 expressed concern that increased workloads and high expectations for support staff has resulted in increased medical absences this school year. The Board and Administration share this concern. Employee Health Services will continue to work diligently to ensure that staff members who experience health issues have the support needed for a successful return to work.

The Board acknowledges that the pension reform currently being considered by the Province may have an impact on the District's ability to retain staff. It will be important that all district staff who contribute to either the Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) or the Public Service Pension Plan (PSPP) have the opportunity to fully understand the ramifications that any pension reforms will have on their personal situation.

In an effort to respond to the concerns relative to workload and to address concerns related to building capacity of our support staff the Board and Administration have committed to working with Local 3550. Plans are in place to address the issues of workload and training for new and existing staff to be effective in their work. As a result of this collaborative work the District will be launching a pilot project to provide Administrative Assistants with training prior to sending them out to schools. It is expected that the opportunity for paid training prior to being placed in the supply pool will assist the District in meeting our attraction needs now and in the future. The Staff Development team has also made adjustments in the last year that provide Educational Assistants with some initial training, including job shadowing prior to being placed in the supply pool. These are just two of the examples of the collaborative work between Local 3550 and the Administration that support the ongoing learning of our support staff. The Board and the Administration are confident that the ongoing collaborative efforts between Staff Development and Local 3550 will result in increased opportunities for timely professional development that meets the needs of schools and our support staff.

The Board and Administration are committed to working with Local 3550 to address concerns about support supply coverage and contracting out of supply educational assistant work.

The Board acknowledges that Local 3550 is a key stakeholder in the creation of the Edmonton Student Transportation Authority (ESTA). As a result, the District will be seeking input from Local 3550 as the work proceeds to establish the ESTA.

The Board thanks CUPE Local 3550 for their continued collaboration on the many complex issues and challenges facing the District. We thank our more than two thousand support staff who provide amazing service to Edmonton Public Schools. Together, our focus remains on the success of the children under our care.

#### CUPE Local 474 (Custodial Staff)

The Board relies on the work of the members of CUPE Local 474 Custodial Staff (Local 474) to keep our buildings clean and safe for students and staff. Although it may sometimes seem that clean and safe learning environments are taken for granted, our students, staff, parents and community members notice and appreciate the work of our custodial staff. We very much appreciate this important contribution to the success of the District.

In its presentation, Local 474 expressed their belief that in order to meet the need for clean and healthy schools, which will meet the health and safety needs of students and staff as well as being environmentally responsible, the District must be able to fill permanent head custodian positions and increase the number of trained custodial replacement staff. The Board appreciates the collaborative work that was undertaken by Local 474 and the Administration to establish a more effective custodial career pathway. The mutual purpose for the development of a career pathway for custodial staff was to provide increased opportunities for custodial staff to achieve 4th and 5th class power engineering certification. It is expected that the new career pathway will enable our staff to aspire towards increasing levels of responsibility in our organization, helping us to achieve effective succession planning into the future. The Administration believes that, if we continue to work together through the implementation of the custodial career pathway, this work will have a positive impact on the District's ability to attract and retain custodial staff into the future.

The Board recognizes the need for a support system for custodial staff and acknowledges the value of the work of the custodial consultants and the custodial mentor position. The administration is working to balance short term resource challenges with the long term needs related to the support that is required for our custodial staff. In an effort to provide ongoing support to custodial staff, the District established the Supervisor, Custodial Support Services position in March 2011. This position is responsible for ensuring that custodial supply staff continue to receive training, guidance, support and supervision necessary to ensure effective work practices in supporting the work of administrators and custodial staff in schools. One of the key deliverables from the establishment of this position is the standardization of practices related to supply services. Functions that were spread across several departments have been centralized under this position. Support for schools and central departments has continued to evolve through the development of an on-line Custodial Support Services website. This website provides information relative to Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S), custodial training, green cleaning, and Board Policies and Administrative Regulations related to custodial staff.

This position, by overseeing these initiatives, plays a key role in providing ongoing support to supply and permanent custodial staff across the District.

The Board acknowledges the Local 474's concern regarding the application of the custodial staffing guidelines in schools, particularly in those instances where rooms designated as decommissioned space are continuing to be used.

The Board and Administration extend our appreciation to the members of CUPE Local 474 for their collaborative efforts on many joint committees, including the Custodial Staff Development Committee. In addition, we thank all members of our custodial staff for their work to keep our buildings welcoming, safe and clean. Together, we will continue to make a difference for the students we serve.

#### CUPE 784 (Maintenance Staff)

The Board acknowledges the important contributions of CUPE Local 784 Maintenance Staff (Local 784) to the success of the District. It is widely recognized and appreciated that our maintenance staff take a great deal of pride in keeping our district facilities in good repair. The timely, professional service from our maintenance staff on a daily basis is appreciated by all stakeholders.

The 2013-2014 school year has been a challenging financial time for the District. The Board shares Local 784's concern that the reduction in staffing has had an impact on all staff groups, especially the maintenance staff. The Administration continues to work to balance short term resource challenges with the long term needs related to maintaining the expertise that we have in Facilities Maintenance. The Board also acknowledges Local 784's concerns related to succession planning. Working to maintain expertise and build capacity of the Facilities Maintenance staff will be an important consideration.

Timely maintenance of district buildings is an ongoing concern that the Board shares with Local 784. In an effort to address this concern, the Administration has initiated the development of an Infrastructure Strategy. Stakeholders, including maintenance staff, will have the opportunity to provide feedback in developing the plan. The plan will address current and emerging concerns related to district infrastructure.

The Board acknowledges the challenges faced by maintenance staff who are confronted by frustrated school staff who are not familiar with the wait times that they are currently experiencing. The Board and the Administration are committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all staff. All staff can expect to be treated respectfully. In the event that staff have not been treated respectfully, the incident(s) should be reported to their supervisor.

The Board appreciates the safe, accountable and expert service from Facilities Maintenance. The service of CUPE Local 784 members helps to create the conditions required for student success. You are an important part of our team who is working together to ensure student success.



**CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

The Board appreciates the effort that each staff group undertakes in preparing and presenting their budget brief. The Board on an annual basis recognizes and honours our staff by considering their views on the upcoming budget and responding to the issues they raise.

All DU Administrators and Principals will be provided with copies of the Board report and written submissions provided by the staff groups. District leaders will review this information and consider the issues raised through the perspective of their school or central decision unit.

**ATTACHMENTS & APPENDICES**

ATTACHMENT I	Exempt Staff
ATTACHMENT II	Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37
ATTACHMENT III	CUPE Local 3550 (Support Staff)
ATTACHMENT IV	CUPE Local 474 (Custodial Staff)
ATTACHMENT V	CUPE Local 784 (Maintenance Staff)

KP:cm

Good afternoon Chair Hoffman, Vice Chair Janz, Trustees, Superintendent Robertson, Ladies and Gentleman.

I would like to start by introducing myself. My name is Cindy Camp and I am a member of the Exempt Staff Liaison Committee. I am an Occupational Therapist and have been with Edmonton Public Schools for 10 years. I work at two of our Early Education sites providing support for preschool children who have a speech and language delay and/or who have a medical diagnosis, such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, or Autism Spectrum Disorder.

At the end of my presentation, there will be a slideshow which features some of the other Exempt Staff from across the district. These pictures represent a small percentage of the men and women who make up our Exempt Staff. In total, there are 620 of us with more than one hundred different working titles. 552 are non-management positions and 68 are management positions. We are the only staffing group who is not unionized, nor do we participate in a collective bargaining process; instead, the Board provides the Terms and Conditions of Employment for Exempt Staff.

As different and varied as our group is, we all have one goal in common – to contribute to the district vision of transforming the learners of today into the leaders of tomorrow. As Exempt Staff, we support school administrators, teachers, central leaders, and all students including English Language Learners, special needs students included in regular classrooms and congregated sites, FNMI students, and high school students facing challenges. Our staff group ensures 9,000 staff get paid on time and receive benefits, ensure our technology is current and working efficiently, manage and support sound financial processes, plan safe transportation for students, and coordinate communication to our public. This is just the tip of the iceberg. We share our functional expertise, successes, resources, collective knowledge and learning collaboratively in teams across the district contributing significantly to the social capital in the district.

To help meet this vision, we need to ensure that Edmonton Public Schools will be the choice of job seekers across all disciplines. Current and future employees, especially the Millennials, must continue to support 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning within our organization. In order to provide all students with the right to an incredible learning environment, we need the best Exempt Staff among our ranks. Through collaboration with each other and other staff groups, we will continue to support the district's vision to inspire student success through high quality learning opportunities, supported by meaningfully engaged students, parents, staff and community.

Important steps had been made in cementing Edmonton Public Schools as an employer of choice in June 2012. But, unfortunately, the world economy took a bit of a down turn



and we lost some ground in our compensation package. Salaries kept pace in 2011-12, with a 3% increase and in 2012-13, with a 2.25% increase. Unfortunately, the 2.25% increase expected for 2013-14 was deferred for two years until 2015-16 and for two years our salaries have been frozen in order to retain exempt staff positions. This move has had an impact on some of our work loads, our work-life balance and personal financial situations.

The Exempt Staff group wants to ensure that the Board of Trustees is accountable for completing and following through on the commitments as promised when the 2011-2016 Terms and Conditions of Employment went into effect. These commitments are as follows:

### **Exempt Job Classification & Compensation Review**

First of all, we acknowledge and appreciate the review of the Exempt Job Classification & Compensation currently underway with an anticipated completion date of Fall 2014. We trust that this review will more accurately reflect our current position descriptions and enable Edmonton Public Schools to attract and retain quality staff to better support our students and staff.

Still outstanding however are the following commitments:

### **Exempt Leave Entitlements Review**

The previous Board of Trustees committed to review the Exempt Leave entitlements, such as graduated vacation leave based on years of service.

### **Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Fund**

Another commitment was to establish a distinct application process and pool of money for professional improvement funds solely for Exempt Staff. Currently, Exempt Staff can apply through the same process as the Clause 23 of the Teachers' Collective Agreement. This can be a difficult process for exempt staff to use because our professional development needs are diverse and different than those of teachers. Discipline-specific Professional Development will allow Exempt Staff to increase our expertise, knowledge and skills in order to support students and staff better in the district.

### **Ten Month Hours of Work Review**

The last commitment was to review the hours of work for 10-month staff who work directly in the classrooms supporting students and staff. In order to maximize time spent with students, consultants often work extra hours without compensation in order to complete paperwork or reports. What options might the district explore to ensure this work all gets done?

We look forward to the Board reviewing these items

We believe that Edmonton Public Schools is an employer choice for the long term. Our current staff will mentor the new Millennials. Staff retention and succession planning is a value we hold dear. Currently 35% of our exempt staff are aged 50 plus. As we are in one of the hottest economic climates in the country, it is more evident than ever, that we will need to make special efforts to retain our staff in high quality learning and working environments and the social capital they represent. Strong workplace benefits, competitive salaries, and high quality learning and working environments are all keys to help us achieve this goal. We, as Exempt Staff, are optimistic about our future in the district and the opportunities possible as the Board considers their commitments.

As our demographic shifts, the people you will see on the screen slowly change from Baby Boomers to Millennials, and the even younger Generation Z, who will join our workforce as early as 2016. We need a mixture of these different generations in order to provide mentorship and ensure effective succession planning. The idea of what makes a strong employer is changing too. You may remember hearing the term “work-life balance” where we struggle with finding the ideal balance between work and leisure. According to Jeanne Meister, the Millennial generation believes that the key to the future, perfect workplace is, and I quote, “Work is life and life is work; our jobs are seamlessly blended into all aspects of our personal lives”.<sup>1</sup> Whether you subscribe to the old axiom or the new, strong workplace environments, great people, and flexible employers are key.

Exempt staff are in our work rooms, board rooms, and classrooms. These 600 plus people are out there in our schools, in central, and communities giving their all. We embrace the Cornerstone Values of integrity, collaboration, accountability and equity. And we provide the best possible support to the success of our students and our organization.

Thank you for your time this afternoon. Please enjoy our slideshow and meet some of our Exempt Staff.

Footnote: Reference for the quote

1. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2014/02/06/five-workforce-myths-busted>



**Edmonton Public Teachers Local No. 37  
of the Alberta Teachers' Association**

**Budget Presentation to the  
Board of Trustees  
Edmonton Public Schools**

**April 10, 2014**

April 10, 2014

Chair Hoffman, Trustees, Superintendent Robertson:

Thank you for this opportunity to share the views of Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 of the Alberta Teachers' Association as you prepare for the District's 2014-2015 Budget.

At this time in Alberta, the wealthiest of provinces, we are hearing the familiar suggestions that the funding provided to education is very high (18% of the total provincial budget) and indeed has even increased over last year. While the numbers may appear as adequate, the reality is that they are not. Even with a 3.5% increase in total operational funding for Edmonton Public, it is inadequate to meet the predicted growth pressures: 2.2% for inflation, and at least 2.7% in student growth. In 2012, following pressure from ASBA, the commitment for funding the Base Instructional Grant was to be 5% in the next three years, but only 1% was subsequently delivered. So we expect that our District will continue to face fiscal challenges which they will meet with their best abilities to ensure that the students in the district can and will learn to the best of their ability, taught by great teachers in a quality learning environment. The challenge is to have funding that is predictable and sustainable with commitments to addressing class sizes and adequate space where student population growth is occurring.

It is imperative that the Board, the Senior Administration, and all staff groups continue to be vigilant and to work independently and collectively to protect the interests of public education that we have all worked so hard to build in this province. A system where we believe every child should have the opportunity to reach his/her fullest potential.

In the long run, the best way to stimulate the economy is to have an educated public. We must all advocate for funding support and educational policies which will ensure that our public education system is able to deliver the brightest future for every child, a goal stated clearly by our district cornerstones.

In the past year, the district has faced many significant challenges, starting with a decision to place the maximum possible at the classroom level. This led to major reductions in the number of supports available to staff at the central office level and challenge for our members in those roles. At the same time, in September, over 3000 new students arrived at the doors of the schools needing places in classes that in many cases were already overcrowded. Many of these students were also new to Canada, requiring ELL supports or other adaptations to offer them success in their learning efforts. All this in the context of a province that since 2009 has seen over 41000 students arrive in Alberta while increasing the number of teachers by slightly more than 100 - a pattern that unfortunately seems likely to continue. The pressure of no or limited school space in our new neighbourhoods has seen the district move to a redistricting plan that will attempt to address the needs but we know that the only real solution is more schools. Plans for these have been announced but we are waiting on seeing construction begin in a timely fashion.

In this brief I will outline a number of areas where we believe improvements can be made which would enhance the quality of service our members are able to provide so as to ensure the brightest of futures begins in Edmonton Public Schools. Some of the concerns you will hear come up each year as they have still not been resolved. Other concerns are new as times change and new issues arise.

1. With limitations placed on the District through the funds allocated to the District, we have seen increases in our class sizes, particularly in the division one where, according to the statistics released by the government, our district has the highest number of students on average, per division 1 class in the province. The ACOL (Alberta Commission On Learning) recommendation of 17 students is well below our 22.1 students per class. Working to reduce the size of these classes would provide more time for support and individual help in those vital first steps into learning. Across the other divisions, we also have found our classes larger this year. While these numbers are based on average class size, our Class Size Census, which the Local has done for the last thirteen years, shows this as well. This year, 2794 teachers completed information on 8184 classes taught that day in the district. There were 45.2% of classes in high school that exceeded 30 students using a straight count. This may impact how successful students are in getting scholarships or entrance into some programs at the post secondary level. With the increase in Inclusive classrooms, the composition of the classes are also a concern in meeting the needs of all the students. While Educational Assistants have been available in many of these classes, they too are limited as to how many are available. The end result is that the larger sizes coupled with complex compositions make increasingly difficult the task of individual time with students, while increasing the time needed for assessment and communication with parents. Many teachers offer extra help at non class times which, while effective, forces an even shorter lunch or leaves students needing to forgo other activities in order to get the help. Large complex classes in simple math terms mean that our members have less time for individual time with students. Any move to effectively address this issue would be welcomed.
2. With the reorganization of Central Services and with the District and the province working to support and strengthen inclusive practices – it is imperative that the funding be in place at all levels to support this direction. Again, the government needs to fund these directions fully without taking money from existing educational dollars. It is also important to note that as inclusive practices expand – class sizes must decrease. As we move toward inclusion, the need for release time for teachers and service providers to meet to plan, coordinate and evaluate the delivery of services to all students will also increase.

It is absolutely critical that as our classrooms change, this change cannot become an add-on to a teacher's already full plate.

In reference to class sizes – we continue to support the sizes referenced by the Alberta Commission on Learning in October of 2003, however, the Commission refers to district averages which have not proven effective for the average teacher. We would advocate weighted site averages for Grades K–3 of 17 students; Grades 4–6 of 23 students; Grades 7–9 of 25 students; and Grades 10–12 of 27 students. By using weighted numbers we can better support all students in an inclusive model.

3. The District's move to working with the Edmonton Catholic School district in the area of student transportation suggests that savings of up to 2.5 million dollars may be realized. These dollars would, I'm certain would find use elsewhere in the district supporting our classrooms. It should be noted that our community schools should continue to be promoted and all that is possible should be done to have choices within the neighbourhood community schools to reduce the dependency on transportation.

4. The move to the Tell Them From Me survey in place of the previous district survey brought, as might be expected, some concerns, however, we applaud the elimination of the question related to the principal which has long been an issue for our members.
5. Technology resources place a large stress on educational budgets. Challenges around the move to more digital assessments being used are requiring schools to ensure that they are able to have the technology on site. This is an important area because the proper technology with the proper training and release time for teachers to take this training will ease stress for our members as they develop their abilities to make the most of these resources. If in-house training is used – release time still needs to be considered for both teachers and the in-house coach. The recent move to Google Docs and applications relied on onsite teacher mentors who supported their colleagues often on a collegial basis and should have release time to provide this support. This, on top of the seemingly endless expense of keeping our technology current.
6. Our joint committee on site-based decision-making has done good work, however, we have still not achieved after many years – full implementation of site-based decision-making models. This work needs to be an important part of training for all leaders in the District and an expectation of process at each site.

When school based budgets first evolved there was a great amount of formal involvement by all staffing units within a school. This often involved working together to develop priorities and to allocate funds. Gradually this has shifted and in some schools teachers are totally left out of the budget process and in some cases never even see the budget. Teachers in these schools feel they are not empowered with information nor given any decision-making power. The District needs to ensure that the budget process is both accountable and transparent with authentic shared decision making involvement in all schools.

7. Substitute teachers are a diverse and valued part of our teaching and learning teams. The Local acknowledges and appreciates the time spent by District HR staff in meeting with our substitute teachers. It is important that all schools maintain an adequate budget line to allow for appropriate substitute service rather than internal coverage. When internal coverage is used – administrators lose valuable admin time or teachers lose much needed prep time. This creates unnecessary stress and may create issues around instructional minutes.
8. We are looking forward to the Pilot projects with the new District wide school calendars and the Staff Development Fund. The calendars will enable all our members across the entire District to be in a position to collaborate and share with their colleagues. There will also be two more PD days in each of the two years to do this. Fixed dates will also allow for effective planning to make the best use of the days through collaborative planning for catchments or by schools who wish to share common themes. We also look forward to the new Staff Development Fund as a means of offering Professional Development to our members in conjunction with the PD support offered by the District. Our members will be able to access support to reach the goals outlined in their Professional Growth Plans or that help our members further enhance their skills in providing quality experiences and improving student outcomes. We expect that this distribution of PD resources will also enhance the sense of value and respect for our members as professionals. Our collaboration in a committee to develop the guidelines for this fund will serve as yet another example of how the District and its staff work together for the betterment of the students in our care.

9. New teachers continue to need significant support and nurturing as they develop their own professional expertise. Significant work continues to be done in this area through our consultant members, and the New Teacher Induction Program. It is hoped that we can continue this work together to strengthen the start new teachers get in their career which will lead to better teaching, longer careers and successful learning environments for students.
10. Work life balance is a major issue raising its head in new ways every day. Technology has made it easier to work from home and to provide additional after-hours services. New demands are being put on our members all the time. Our members want to always provide the best of service – but they also want the best of life away from work as well. In today's world it is more important than ever that the District and all staff employees work together to ensure a positive work/life balance for all employees.

Thank you for allowing us this platform to share our ideas for consideration as District plans are developed for 2014/15.

Our Local is proud of the opportunity joint committees have afforded us to work together. We are honoured to work alongside our colleagues from Support, Custodial, Maintenance and exempt groups. We are in a complex business. We all want to do our best. We all want what is best for children and we all want to work in a healthy and caring environment. The District continues to make significant strides in this regard – but to maintain the loyalty of staff and the high quality of public education that we strive for – we must continue the work.

We also want to thank the Board and the District for the ongoing opportunity we have to work together, to share our input and to make our concerns known. We appreciate our ongoing meetings with the Superintendent and Senior Administration through Liaison and the ongoing practice of having members of Senior Administration attend the meetings of the Council of School Representatives. This only works in a trusting relationship. When personal agendas are set aside and decisions are made to benefit all employees, when the workplace atmosphere is highly respectful – our students flourish and we truly are having a positive impact on the future.

Nels Olsen

President

Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 of the ATA





Canadian Union of Public Employees  
Local 3550

Budget Presentation to  
Edmonton Public Schools  
Board of Trustees

April 10, 2014

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**Board Chair Hoffman;**

**Trustees;**

**Superintendent Robertson;**

**Staff Members;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Good afternoon. I am Carol Chapman, President of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3550 – Edmonton Public Schools Support Staff. Joining me today is Chief Steward, Gloria Lepine and Treasurer, Linda Harris, and Executive Board Members Angele Wasyliv and Karen Parks. As the public board meetings are now held during school hours, the other elected executive officers and other members of CUPE 3550 are in their workplaces in support of 'bright futures' for the students of Edmonton Public Schools.

Thank you for an opportunity to share what we, the non-teaching staff of Edmonton Public Schools believe to be important points for schools, central departments and the Board to consider when developing the 2014 - 2015 Proposed Budget and for long term planning for Edmonton Public Schools.

In past presentations I have advocated for priorities important to Support Staff. I will be speaking today about how some of those priorities were supported and how we as support staff and a District need that support to continue and to grow. Board Chair Hoffman, Vice Chair Janz and Trustee Johner have heard parts of this before but this is an opportunity for me to share with our new trustees. I welcome the new trustees and look forward to getting to know you in your new and important role.

CUPE Local 3550 is proud to represent over 2,000 permanent full-time, part-time and hourly dedicated non-teaching education workers. Our members play critical roles in support of student learning, student safety and business administration in our district sites every day.

We continue to work jointly with Administration and other employee groups to address issues and strengthen our district.

We continue to work with the Employee Health Services department to provide our members support when there are health issues. Our concerns with increased workloads and high expectations contributing to increased medical absences is repeated again this year.

I thank Administration for addressing the critical need for adequate staffing levels in that department. We appreciate Employee Health Services' cooperative approach that ensures our members are supported through health issues or injuries and are returned to work safely.

CUPE Local 3550 continues to work with the Staff Relations department to solve issues and come to a win/win for the District and the members of the local. The open communication and cooperative relationship we have with this department as we attempt to resolve difficult situations is very much appreciated.

At the March 18, 2014 Public Board Meeting a report from the Edmonton Student Transportation Feasibility Study was presented. I expect it is no surprise to any of you that CUPE Local 3550 has serious concerns about how this will impact support staff from the Student Transportation Department. We also felt blindsided and believe that a conversation with affected staff groups should have happened prior to the Public Board meeting.

Edmonton Public Schools is an educational institution and recognizes how critical professional development is to supporting our staff who provide daily supports for our students.

You, the Board, have recently approved a new 2 year school calendar.

We have a commitment from Administration that Support Staff will not suffer lost wages for Teacher Days in Lieu or days when there are no students or teachers for the duration of the pilot calendar years as a result of discussions with the ATA.

We expect that commitment to continue after the pilot is complete and future calendars are considered.

The new district calendar includes 5 district wide professional development days. Planning District Professional Development opportunities for Support Staff has been difficult in the past as there were no common PD days.

The new calendar allows for Professional Development to be offered to Support Staff on a catchment or district-wide level. The barrier of disrupting classes, costs and availability of replacement staff, etc. has been removed as students do not attend on these days.

In every budget presentation I speak about our Staff Development Department and programs. This department has evolved through changes in staffing levels and district expectations and we commend them for the great work they do.

The Staff Development department will need continued support to ensure that they have resources to adequately address the increased demands of professional development opportunities for support staff and other staff groups.

Technology has been recognized by our District as a great tool to increase efficiency, reduce our environmental impact, and offer increased communication opportunities with staff, parents and the public. Software applications for administrative purposes are always under review to ensure the needs of the district are met. One of the ways our Staff Development Department can be supported is by utilizing a software system that can effectively handle the demands of Professional Development opportunities for 20, 200 or 2,000 registrants.

Edmonton Public Schools, unfortunately is not insulated from outside pressures when ensuring district staffing needs are met. We are anticipating provincial legislation coming forward that will have a serious impact on the Local Authorities Pension Plan.

This, in turn will have a serious impact on the staffing levels in our district. I suspect that support staff who are eligible to retire early under the current LAPP rules will exercise that opportunity prior to the January 1, 2016 implementation date of the proposed changes.

They will take with them their many years of experience, skills and knowledge. Like our students, this District needs to support our new staff as they begin their career with Edmonton Public Schools. They have massive shoes to fill!

The New Staff Orientation program is a great initiative in setting them up for success. The Administrative Assistant Training program has been expanded to include training for both higher level and entry level positions. We expect that the demand for these programs is only going to increase.

My hope is that when the 'tsunami' exodus of staff in the near future happens, the District has adequately anticipated the supports needed for recruitment and succession planning.

On Wednesday, April 17, 2013 after nearly two years of bargaining, our members ratified a Collective Agreement. As part of those negotiations, joint committees were formed to discuss our Contracting Out language and also the feasibility of the creation of a permanent Spare Supply Board for Support Staff.

Former Trustee Ripley and Trustee Shipka were the Board representatives at our Bargaining table and heard our serious concerns and frustrations regarding the appalling numbers of supply teachers who are filling Educational Assistant vacancies when there are no supply Educational Assistants available.

In our 2013 Budget Presentation, I spoke about the need to adequately staff the Support Staff Supply Pool and the use of supply teachers to fill supply educational assistant vacancies.

Here we are, after many months of discussions about this issue at the Bargaining Table, and the past year during our committee discussions about Supply Services, the practice of filling EA supply vacancies with supply teachers continues. I ask the District to take CUPE Local 3550's concerns seriously for many reasons.

1. CUPE Local 3550 believes that support staff work must be performed by support staff workers. Using non-support staff to fill these positions we believe is a form of Contracting Out which constitutes a violation of our Collective Agreement and potential lost wages for supply support staff workers. Shortage of educational assistants in the Supply Pool seems to be a chronic problem. 425 assignments in March were filled by supply teachers. Unacceptable.
2. Teachers have been hired by our district to support student learning and their role is critical in the classroom. However, many may not have the training or skills to support students with severe medical, learning or behavioural issues.
3. Fiscal Responsibility: Support staff who fill these assignments receive considerably less in wages than supply teachers. The **difference** in cost between supply educational assistants and supply teachers is in the ball park of over 1 million dollars **annually**. Those dollars could be more effectively used to address this problem if directed appropriately toward support staff recruitment and retention issues or support staff wages. We were told several times

while at the bargaining table, the district does not have an issue with recruitment and retention of support staff.

4. In the spirit of working cooperatively, we feel Administration has been provided with more than enough time to address this issue. We were patient through the bargaining discussions. We were patient this year during committee discussions. We discussed a potential target date to cease this practice as of Spring Break. Spring Break has come and gone. Now we have been advised that MAYBE this MIGHT be addressed in the next school year.
5. CUPE Local 3550's patience is depleted. We are EXTREMELY frustrated that our concerns are way down the priority list. We feel it is not right to be still begging for this issue to be addressed.

We understand the role that volunteers play in our District. However, library staff positions and FTEs are being cut when libraries are implementing a new system with the expectation that volunteers will do that work. Learning Resource Centres in schools must be maintained by competent, consistent Library Technicians to ensure our libraries remain the exciting vital hubs of the school.

What keeps CUPE Local 3550 members on the job are the children in our schools and knowing that, as partners in their education, we are making a difference in their school experiences and successes. Support staff are willing to go the extra mile in support of the quality teaching and learning that takes place every day in this district. The District needs all staff groups working together to make the wheels go round and support staff are a vital cog in this wheel. We are a proud part of the team of Edmonton Public Schools support staff, maintenance, custodial, teachers, and exempt staff who ensure 'bright futures begin here!'

Thank-you very much for your time and your attention.

The future of K-12 Public Education for Alberta's children depends on our Public School Trustees and your advocacy.

*Carol Chapman,*  
President, CUPE Local 3550

# **Edmonton Public Schools**



## **2014 BUDGET BRIEF**

**Presented to the Edmonton Public Schools  
Board of Trustees**

**May 6, 2014**

**To: Chairperson and Trustee Sarah Hoffman**

**Trustees Cheryl Johner, Michelle Draper, Orville Chubb, Ray Martin, Ken Gibson, Michael Janz, Nathan Ip and Sherry Adams**

**Superintendent Darrel Robertson**

Good afternoon. My name is Barry Benoit, President of Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 474. CUPE 474 represents the Edmonton Public Schools Custodial Staff. I, the executive and members of CUPE Local 474 thank you for this opportunity to share our observations by the Local and to have a voice in the budget planning process.

The custodial staff within Edmonton Public Schools are very proud of their work and accomplishments. At the beginning or end of the day, our members take pride in ensuring that the students and staff at Edmonton Public are housed in clean, safe environments. Our members want to provide the highest possible standard of custodial care for students, staff and public.

There are concerns, however, about staffing levels, educational support, safety and collaboration between Edmonton Public and custodial staff. Our members recognize the budget restrictions that the Province has imposed on school boards in Alberta, but nevertheless believe that you can begin to take steps in the upcoming year to address some of these issues.

#### **1. Custodial staffing levels in Edmonton's schools.**

CUPE 474, again, expresses concerns about staffing levels. For over ten years we have been expressing our concerns about the slow erosion of staffing levels that was affecting our ability to do our jobs. We, again, point out that the 2007 *Kinnaird Planning and Research Ltd. Study of Operations and Maintenance Expenditures of Alberta School Districts* found that Edmonton Public's custodial workers ranked as cleaning the most square footage per hour compared to all other school districts in the province - 19% above the average. It also found that expenditures on cleaning and custodial new equipment and tools were also well below the provincial average.

CUPE 474 wishes to remind you that the Union and its members are prepared to work with the Board and administrators to implement changes in the least disruptive and most cost-effective way possible. However, our recommendations will mean something only if custodial services are valued by this Board.

***We recommend the Board take steps in the upcoming year to restore custodial staffing to levels required to achieve objective standards for facility maintenance and cleanliness.*** Custodial staffing should be based on such variables as school size, age of facility, student enrollment, staff population and community use. Based on our surveys of other districts and facilities, we consider the following to be basic requirements.

- a) Regardless of enrollment, no school of 50,000 sq ft. or less should be staffed with less than 2.5 FTE, including a full-time Head Custodian. Facilities of 100,000 sq ft or more



must have a Utility Custodian (with few exceptions). Where twinning occurs, each location should have its own Head Custodian and custodial staff.

- b) Locations between 50,000 and 100,000 require a minimum of 3-4 full-time custodial staff.

**2. There is no incentive to be a Head Custodian. Head Custodians are the ones who bear the brunt of staff shortages.** Amongst other duties, your Head Custodians assist with hiring, supervising and training of custodial staff, develop work schedules and assign duties. They must find time to perform daily checks of the building, respond to requests or concerns from staff and advise the Decision Unit Administrator or designate of any problems, issues or concerns. They have to order and maintain custodial supplies, tools and equipment; liaise with City and assist with bookings as required. They monitor and report problems on boilers, HVAC systems, pressure vessels and safety devices and initiate repairs and provide mechanical training to other staff. In addition, they are in charge of health & safety, must report potential hazards and unsafe conditions to administration; report workplace accidents and incidents to the administration, ensure supplier labels and workplace labels are appropriately affixed, select and ensure the appropriate use of personal protective equipment for all custodial staff; ensure custodial staff receive appropriate training, and that they are aware of and comply with practices and procedures. All of these duties and more are performed by the Head Custodian for \$1.00 per hour more than the Custodians.

There are schools within the district that have had increased staff turnover due to the stress and increased duties that Head Custodians and staff believe they have to perform. This struggle to complete all the work expected is exacerbated by the decrease in staffing, trained staff, and unrealistic square footage cleaning expectations.

**3. Custodial replacement staff.** The current number of spare custodians is not sufficient to cover for staff on leave. Replacing them with temporary staff is not an answer, as they seldom have the experience or qualifications; e.g., a power engineer's certificate or training in school heating/cooling systems. Few have prior experience in an education environments or even the most basic in-service training. Worse yet are the times when no custodial staff is on duty, because spare or temporary custodians are not available. There are times where facilities are in use but no custodial staff is assigned.

- a) ***We recommend that this Board take steps to increase the complement of custodial staff on the spare board to address temporary staff shortages.***
- b) Identify temporary positions that are more accurately classified as permanent, and to provide the additional training they need to shift to these positions.

**4. The Staffing Formula** needs to be revisited primarily because it utilizes a ratio of custodial staff to school cleaning which ignores the wide range of custodial work actually being done. Competing demands for a custodian's time cut into time available for the cleaning duties on which the formula is based. All custodians, not just Head Custodians, are responsible for core tasks that require time and effort regardless of the size of the facility;

For example a Custodial Assistant may be scheduled to have four hours to clean 12 rooms and 2 bathrooms. A quick glance at the schedule may indicate that this is not an unreasonable work expectation. What is not taken into consideration is all of the other expectations that bite into the time allotted. This Custodial Assistant may have to also secure building and take care of rentals - shortened by a 15 minute break and the time required to open doors for rentals, and at least ten minutes after to walk through with groups after to check for damages. What happens if there is a staff shortage? Usually, that Custodial Assistant has to increase the number of rooms cleaned. Being told to just empty the garbage and move on means the standards of cleanliness are severely compromised.

**As the Kinnard Planning Report indicated, Edmonton Public is currently cleaning the most square footage per hour; however, a new formula must be implemented, which recognizes actual custodial workload.** This workload must reflect such factors as: the age of the school, the student population, the level of community use after hours and on weekends, and the kinds of tasks (for example, snow removal and grounds care) are included in the custodian's responsibilities.

5. **There remains a significant need for a support system.** Presently there are 2 custodial consultants and one custodial mentor. These positions were conceived as a joint venture between the Board and CUPE 474. This innovation became part of the critical ingredients for custodial professional development. In particular the Education and Training consultant delivered cleaning modules, safety certification and computer training. Each of these components ensured that the custodial staff were educated in the latest cleaning and work safety techniques.

At the present time, there is no Acting Education and Training consultant. It is very important that we retain this position which is essential in maintaining a properly trained and informed custodial workforce in the District.

***We recommend that this Board take steps to ensure that the 2 custodial consultants and custodial mentor positions be maintained.***

This Board is aware of all the studies that CUPE 474 has presented in the past. These studies clearly indicated that students learn better in a clean and well maintained environment. The basis of custodial work is to strive for the optimal health, safety and comfort of the occupants of the building.

While the requirements may have changed with the change to high efficiency heating systems, the expectation of safety for our students has not. Having a qualified Power Engineer overseeing the operation of all aspects of the heating plant is just best practice. While the kilowatt ratings of the heating plants have been a topic of discussion in regards to the level of certification needed by custodial staff, it still remains that to have a qualified Power Engineer monitoring the boilers is, again, just best practice.

CUPE 474 members want what is best for the students and staff of Edmonton Public Schools. Our members value being part of the learning process along with Administration, Support Staff, Exempt Staff and Maintenance to support the work that is being done in the classrooms by teachers. We all want students to be able to learn in a safe, healthy and caring environment.

CUPE Local 474 is proud to be part of Edmonton Public Schools team and would like to thank the Board for your time and attention today.

Barry Benoit, President  
CUPE Local 474

# 2014

I would like to thank the trustees for inviting me to speak today about the upcoming year's budget with regards to maintenance and construction.

I am Jeff McIntyre, the current president of CUPE Local 784, representing approximately 176 employees who maintain your schools. We keep the heat running, clear your snowy parking lots, maintain the lighting, and install security and PA systems just to name a few of the things we do. Basically if you need it fixed or installed, we are your guys.

I am also a full-time electrician for EPSB who has personally felt and seen the impacts of last years' budget cut within the district.

Last year I stood here and made a presentation regarding our concerns for the health of the school board buildings and operations if drastic cuts were made. Many of those fears have come true. Since last year I have seen an almost 25% decline of the maintenance staff employed in the district.

Today I would like to share with you some of the things that have changed and are changing, many in just one year's time.

## **The City is Changing**

The City of Edmonton is growing and bringing thousands of additional school aged children to the district. Every day we are noticing busier schools and more make-shift classrooms in libraries, gymnasiums, and common areas.

This means more computers, more desks, more wear and tear, and just generally more maintenance.

There are also P3 schools with a separate contractor maintaining those buildings. But when that contractor does not respond or doesn't respond in a timely manner, we are there to jump in and fix any problems that arise. I have personally been to many of these P3 schools and have been told by the custodian or administration staff that they miss having a school maintained by EPSB maintenance staff.

You've had to do an exceptional amount of work to deal with the growing city and growing demand on our schools and school system, and all that trickles down the line meaning more work for us as well.

I want to be clear that we are not complaining about doing more work, in fact we relish in the opportunity to show every school our vast talents and expertise that we are so proud of.

I mention this to show that while there are thousands more students, and dozens of more rooms to maintain, the staff employed to maintain them have decreased by almost a quarter.

While doing research for this presentation I came across an old document that shows in 1959 when the maintenance local was first organized, there were 175 employed in our local.

Today there are 176. That means that while the school board has added multiple dozens of buildings and tens of thousands of students, we currently have 1 more maintenance staff. It makes it easy to see why so many of our schools are in rough shape.

### **Current Adversity**

Last year the school board said we'd have to do, "less with less"; however, each individual maintenance employee is working harder to do more, but it is an incredibly difficult struggle trying to keep up to the work. Some days we race from site to site dealing with nothing but the absolute most urgent emergencies. As we do the highest priority work first we face pressure from angry school staff who have seen wait times increase for non-emergent jobs. Stress is constantly high as worry about job security and our continued capacity to maintain the best possible learning environments. We feel immense pressure each day we come to work trying to keep the schools warm and safe. This year, quite literally, grown men have been brought to tears as the pressure has overcome them at work. Sobbing employees is not a long term recipe for success! We worry about the lasting impact the current maintenance staffing levels will have.

### **Succession Planning**

As predicted, last year we had a record year for retirements with approximately 6% of our staff leaving to start the next chapter of their lives. Things were looking good with new younger employees who had gone through training and were well prepared to take over the responsibilities of the soon to be retired. These younger employees were being trained on systems and equipment that our senior members know how to maintain, and we were prepared to transition those retirees and our maintenance work successfully.

The problem now is that these younger trained employees have been laid off and we don't have the man power to properly take over those responsibilities. We predict that we will see an even bigger increase in retiring maintenance staff next year.

But if we act quickly I believe we can recruit some of the recently laid off employees back to EPSB. That window is closing fast though.

I have spoken to many of the laid off members who say they have found good jobs since leave the district, but who would return to EPSB because they see us as a family, they love helping children, and this job gives them a satisfaction that other jobs don't. They won't feel like this forever, especially if time passes and it feels like we've given up on them.

I know some of you may be thinking that we could just hire new staff if those who are gone now don't return. That may not be as easy as you think. EPSB doesn't have the attraction and retention that it once had. With outside contractor rates increasing, the constant threat of pension benefits decreasing, a growing reputation of job insecurity and a plethora of jobs available in a booming city, you might not see that many resumes coming across your desk.

Now let's assume we can get some new qualified staff. Who is going to train them? As I mentioned last year in my presentation, we have a very unique set of buildings with very uniquely trained staff who know how to fix and maintain them. Whether it's knowing where all the nooks and crannies are that contain all the various apparatus necessary to operate a building or a 100 year old boiler and temperature controls system that's undergone several modernizations and now has 100, 50 and 30 year old parts all integrated to work together, we currently have someone intimately familiar with that system and how to maintain it.

We do want to thank the board for trying to work with us to get through these issues. Last fall we requested a meeting to share some ideas from our members to help save jobs. I felt it was a productive meeting with our current superintendent Darryl Robertson in attendance.

Although not all of our ideas shared were implemented, we felt it was a positive experience. I look forward to more idea sharing opportunities that could possibly help the district as a whole.

We also thank you for any advocating that is being done with the province to build schools using a model that will allow us to properly maintain our buildings for decades to come.

## **Conclusion**

This was a bad year. We are pleading with you to help us make next year a little better. We will continue to work as hard as possible to maintain our schools in the safest manner possible. We are strong but there is a limit to what they can accomplish if things stay status quo.

Let me reiterate, we are up to the challenge. We are willing, but we just need a some help from you.