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April 21, 2022

Jorge Illanes  
President, Edmonton Public Schools' Support Staff  
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 3550  
14207- 115 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, Alberta T5M 3B6

Dear Mr. Illanes:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank you for your recent presentation made on behalf of CUPE Local 3550 and its members. The Board appreciated the clarity you provided on several of the Local's most important interests and concerns. I also wish to acknowledge the time you took at the outset of your presentation to outline the important work performed by CUPE 3550 members across the Division, as well as the significance of International Women's Day and the important roles carried out by women in so many aspects of our lives.

The Board felt your presentation addressed three primary areas: the necessity of appropriate funding for public education, the Local's support for the elimination of systemic barriers within the Division, and the importance of professional development funding for your members.

With respect to public education funding, you would have heard Superintendent Robertson communicate with leadership at the recent Division Leadership meeting regarding anticipated provincial funding for the upcoming school year and the challenges we are likely to face. We share your concerns regarding the need for adequate and predictable public education funding. I trust that CUPE Local 3550 sees the passion that our Board has for public education and feels confident that we will continue to lobby and advocate towards this goal. This includes our concerns over matters such as increased funding for charter schools which you referenced, the lack of provincial funding for necessary and important Division capital projects, and concerns with the overall funding for public education as a whole.

You also spoke in support of addressing systemic barriers that continue to exist within the Division and in society as a whole. There is much work to do in this area, but many important steps have already been initiated by the Division over the past number of months in this regard. One of the most important is the Division's Anti-Racism and Equity Action Plan that is being implemented in support of our Board policy related to Anti-Racism and Equity ([HAAB.BP Anti-Racism and Equity](#)). This plan is a multi-year initiative encompassing several key areas, but beginning in 2021-2022, it includes:

- Support for schools and enhancement of school capacity;
- A focus on human resources practices and the engagement of all staff;
- The development of a model to support the collection of extended student demographic data.

Each key area includes specific actions we will take as a Division in this school year and subsequent action plans will be created to continue this work beyond this school year. We are pleased that CUPE Local 3550 is vocal in its support of the objectives and we look forward to working with this Local, as well as other staff groups, students, families, and the community in supporting this journey.

You also mentioned the importance of professional development for the Local and its members. I observe that this has been mentioned in past presentations and that you continue to request that the Board give adequate attention to this area. The Board is listening and shares your interest in ensuring that staff have adequate opportunities for professional development, as it has the ability to both increase an individual's work life satisfaction and career opportunities, while simultaneously providing greater value to the Division in support of our students. In this regard, I am advised that Administration is optimistic regarding the potential positive impact of recent initiatives, including an extension to the Administrative Assistant Programs which guarantees ongoing employment for your members until the end of this school year and increased opportunities for professional learning. As always, I will relay your comments to Administration for consideration. You may also wish to contact Human Resources directly as I understand that related discussions would be welcomed at the Support Staff Training & Advisory Committee, or by Human Resources professionals working in the staff development area.

Thank you for your input and ideas for consideration. It is extremely important that the Board is connected with the Local and its members, and remains aware of both current and future interests and concerns. Once again, on behalf of the entire Board of Trustees, I would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for the commitment and contributions made by both CUPE Local 3550 and all its members in support of Division students.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks  
Board Chair