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June 17, 2025

Barry Benoit
President, Edmonton Public Schools Custodial Staff
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 474
10989 - 124 Street
Edmonton, AB T5M 0H9

Dear Mr. Benoit:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank you for your recent presentation on behalf of CUPE Local 474 and its members. In advance of responding to the more detailed aspects of your presentation, I wanted to use this initial opportunity to extend the entire Board's gratitude to your membership for the challenging work they regularly perform to ensure our students and staff have clean and safe school environments available to them. The Board recognizes that the work can be difficult, and we want to genuinely acknowledge that it is truly appreciated.

You began your comments expressing disappointment over not receiving a response to last year's presentation. The response was reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees late last school year. Unfortunately, following approval by the Board of Trustees, miscommunication occurred within the administration that resulted in it not being issued. Although I understand that the response has just recently been sent to you after learning of the error, I still wish to formally acknowledge the mistake and extend the Board's apologies.

In response to the specific items you raised:

- **Staffing levels** - The Board continues to consistently advocate to the province for adequate, predictable and sustainable funding to address a variety of matters, including, but not limited to, escalating enrolment growth, the need for more learning spaces and the modernization of current spaces, as well as sufficient funding to support necessary staffing levels. You raised a particular concern from your perspective related to Division efforts to reduce custodial staffing at sites by either electing to staff at levels near the minimum allowable collective agreement

limit, or through the introduction of new processes to alter square footage calculations at Division sites.

The Board's understanding is that the collective agreement sets required levels for custodial staffing. As such, individual decision units set custodial staffing levels on that basis, with any permitted adjustments carried out solely in consideration of operational needs. I can assure the Local that the Division's objective is for our schools to provide optimal learning environments for our students and that there is no Board or administrative directive related to the reduction of custodial staffing levels.

- Custodial leadership opportunities – Attraction and retention of qualified custodial staff who are ready for and interested in taking on custodial leadership opportunities is important for Division schools. With last year being heavily scheduled with collective bargaining for all staff groups, including Local 474, the Board can understand why it may not have been an appropriate time to initiate a new joint committee to explore this work. Having now concluded negotiations, it will be interesting to observe whether there is increased interest in leadership positions, which are the highest paid within your collective agreement. I suggest we monitor this over the coming months to determine if there is a change and continue discussions relating to options for addressing this important issue.
- Custodial replacement – When addressing this item, you mentioned the initial work that had been carried out involving the development of a custodial overtime list and expressed concern with respect to the lack of Division-wide implementation. The Board's understanding is that implementation was carried out as discussed between the parties; however, there was very little initial interest or uptake from schools or your members. The Board encourages the Local and administration to continue collaborative efforts to explore whether re-introducing this initiative will support CUPE Local 474 members and the Division.
- Custodial supports – As discussion regarding concerns relating to the roles of Custodial Mentors and Custodial Consultants is operational in nature, I have forwarded the information to the appropriate administrative representatives. The Board shares the Local's desire for the most effective use of resources to support your members.
- Working relationship with the Division – A similar concern was raised by the Local during last year's Board presentation. In reviewing your comments from last year, as well as the examples identified during this year's presentation, which included the Division's pandemic response and the concerns over air handling protocols, it appears that the Local's frustration is largely linked to several longer-standing concerns that the Local feels have not been sufficiently addressed. The




Board values strong relations with all staff groups. Given this, we will forward your comments to administration for consideration and attention, and would encourage the Local to continue to engage with the Division on some of these difficult matters.

- Occupational health and safety concerns – The Board acknowledges this concern has been raised previously by the Local. We are confident that Integrated Infrastructure Services has enacted its current air handling processes bearing in mind a number of important considerations, with the foremost being the health and safety of students, staff, families, and community users. Nevertheless, the Board appreciates hearing the Local's perspective and will share your feedback with the administration for further discussion.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my earlier comments recognizing the important work of CUPE Local 474 members – it is noted by the Board of Trustees and considered a very important component of student success. We hope that you and your members have a successful remainder of the 2024-25 school year.

Sincerely,



Julie Kusiek
Board Chair

AA: sc

c: Catherine Angeles, Corporate Governance Coordinator

