

February 25, 2025

Dear parents, families and guardians,

We are writing to provide an update on the status of negotiations and to reiterate our commitment to reaching an agreement that ends this strike and brings support staff back to work.

Recently we met with the CUPE Local 3550 bargaining team to thoroughly review our latest detailed offer. This comprehensive offer includes information about general wage increases, salary grid enhancements, extended workday, a job evaluation system review, and more details about the proposed certification program. We believe this offer demonstrates the Division's good faith and our commitment to finding real solutions. Despite presenting this comprehensive offer, we remain far apart on the issue of wages.

The Local bargaining committee has rejected our offer, which would see them see increases of 13.5%-23% over an eight year agreement. The union is seeking a deal that amounts to an approximate 31% increase in hourly wages, on average, over the term of a six-year agreement. The Local's requests continue to exceed the Division's ability to pay.

Exploring all options

We are looking at all options to break the current impasse we find ourselves in with CUPE Local 3550. We believe that exploring all available options is essential to reach a resolution, including:

- **Voluntary interest arbitration:** This process allows a neutral third party to consider the facts presented by both sides and determine a resolution that is binding on both the Division and the union. This is one option that could help us reach a solution quickly and fairly. The Division is interested in pursuing this option; however, both parties must agree to this arbitration.
- **Second Disputes Inquiry Board (DIB):** This would provide another opportunity for an independent third-party to review the facts, consider the perspectives on both sides and recommend a solution that members could vote on. The process would not interrupt strike action, but could provide both parties valuable insights and recommendations to help us bridge the gap between our current positions.
- **Other options:** We are investigating other dispute resolution mechanisms within the Alberta Labour Relations Code.

We believe that exploring all available options is essential to reaching a timely resolution. We strongly encourage the Local to avail themselves of one of these options, so we can bring an end to the strike.

Shared goal

We know how significantly this strike is impacting our students, disrupting their learning, and creating challenges for families, staff and the whole school community. We understand the frustration and concern this is causing, and we want to assure you that we are doing everything in our power to bring this situation to a conclusion.

We will continue to keep you informed of any significant developments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DR', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Darrel Robertson
Superintendent of Schools