

October 22, 2024

Dear Parents, guardians, and families,

As we wrote to you on the weekend, we are anticipating CUPE Local 3550 will go on strike this Thursday, October 24, 2024.

Disputes Inquiry Board

Yesterday in an effort to work to resolve contract negotiations with CUPE Local 3550 without a work stoppage, the Division applied to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade for a Disputes Inquiry Board (DIB). A DIB is a neutral third-party process that helps both parties to explore all avenues available to them and explore potential solutions to avoid a strike. If approved, the DIB would allow the Division and CUPE Local 3550 to focus on the process and work towards a negotiated settlement.

By the Division applying for the DIB, we are not removing the union's ability to strike. If the DIB does not result in a resolution, the Local will still have the opportunity to serve strike notice after the process is complete.

Should the application be approved, the DIB process may take approximately 30 days depending on the circumstances.

We expect to hear soon if the DIB has been approved.

Contingency plans

Should the DIB not be approved, the legal strike will proceed on Thursday. While support staff remain off the job, it is our collective goal to have learning continue in the best way possible given our circumstances. For the majority of students, learning will remain in-person, as it does right now.

Any student who requires the support of an educational assistant in order for the student to be safe will be reasonably accommodated in an at-home learning environment. This includes students identified with severe or profound special needs in both Division Centres and inclusive settings, as well as all pre-Kindergarten children.

Schools will be sharing information about what this means for their individual school context, and will be in contact with families where students may be impacted, as soon as possible.

Who is on strike?

CUPE Local 3550 represents a wide range of support staff who work directly with students and in our schools and central departments, including, but not limited to:

- Administrative assistants
- Administrative assistant mentors
- Clerks
- Educational assistants
- Educational assistant mentors
- Food preparers
- Interpreters
- Library technicians
- Licensed practical nurses
- Speech language pathology assistants
- Supply educational assistants
- Technicians

Background

We have been working with CUPE 3550 since 2022 to reach a new collective agreement. We have engaged in mediation and presented a formal offer that includes wage increases for both the 2020-2024 and 2024-2028 terms.

We remain committed to reaching an agreement with our staff groups with the same success that 99 per cent of other Alberta public sector employees and employers have had for the 2020-2024 term.

Impact on student learning

We understand that this strike will have an impact on schools and student learning. We are working incredibly hard to have classrooms, schools and offices remain safe and welcoming spaces.

Our commitment

We value the hard work and dedication of support staff. They are integral members of school communities, and we appreciate everything they do to support student success.

We remain committed to open communication and will continue to provide updates as the situation evolves. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your school principal.

Sincerely,



Darrel Robertson
Superintendent of Schools