



BY EMAIL

October 21, 2024

Honorable Matt Jones
Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade
Members of Executive Council
Executive Branch
425 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
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Dear Minister Jones,

We are writing because the Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) has advised that they intend to ask you to impose a Disputes Inquiry Board (DIB) with respect to the collective agreement negotiations between CUPE Local 3550 and EPSB.

We urge you to not interfere with the constitutional right to strike of CUPE members by imposing a DIB, and instead to remove the wage directives and let the parties negotiate in good faith.

The only items outstanding in bargaining between CUPE Local 3550 and EPSB are monetary. This issue cannot possibly be bridged by a DIB because it is your government's wage directives to school boards that are getting in the way of a deal.

Immediately prior to CUPE Local 3550 members voting overwhelmingly in favour of job action, EPSB wrote to CUPE Local 3550 and confirmed that they remain bound by these directives:

*"Legislation in Alberta that was enacted in 2019 (the *Public Sector Employers Act*), enshrines in law that an employer must comply with bargaining directives set out by the Minister's authority through the Provincial Bargaining and Compensation Office... We are eager to return to the bargaining table to discuss what a potential settlement could look like that works within the legislated directive."*

CUPE Local 3550 has continued to negotiate in good faith with EPSB to find a resolution to this dispute, but many of our members make below a living wage and are struggling to make ends meet with multiple jobs already. There is simply no deal that our members can live with that includes your government's low wage directive. Further mediation between the union and school board will not change this.

CUPE members know that the sustainability of our education system and the ability to provide the important services students and families rely on requires adequate funding from the province. They are no longer willing to carry the funding shortfall.

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We have already seen unprecedented interference in free collective bargaining with the use of a DIB to prevent workers from exercising their right to strike at the Fort McMurray Public and Catholic School Boards without even consulting CUPE. If you impose a DIB at the request of EPSB it will be obvious that the government is acting in bad faith and has no respect for free collective bargaining. There are no outstanding issues between EPSB and CUPE Local 3550 that could be resolved by a DIB as long as the government's wage mandate remains in place.

We see imposing a DIB while maintaining wage directives as an attempt to bully CUPE members into taking the government's wage mandate. Education workers know a thing or two about bullying, and they have told us loudly and clearly that they will not be bullied into a bad deal.

We are available to meet to discuss this issue at your convenience.

Yours truly,



Rory Gill
President, CUPE Alberta



Mandy Lamoureux
President, CUPE Local 3550

c: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools (email: darrel.robertson@epsb.ca)
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