



Memorandum

The Alberta Teachers' Association

INFORMATION MEMO

Date 2025 01 21

To Members of the Edmonton School Division Bargaining Unit

From Sean D Brown, Coordinator, Teacher Employment Services (TES)

Re Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Labour Dispute in Edmonton School Division Schools

The Alberta Teachers' Association (Association) has received questions and concerns from both our local members and the provincial CUPE regarding our members taking on work from a different bargaining unit. To be clear, the messaging in all the memos sent to members has been consistent: "... teachers **should not** be taking on the work of another bargaining unit."

When a member takes on the work of another union, it can prolong the dispute and potentially create conflict between coworkers regardless of their union affiliation. It is crucial for the parties involved to not only show support and solidarity but understand the unique challenges faced by each other. Association leadership, including President Schilling, are in regular and direct contact with local CUPE leadership to address concerns and exchange information.

Yesterday, Edmonton Public Schools (Division) sent out a communication to supply (substitute) teachers, letting them know that some of their assignments may differ from their past experiences because of the CUPE action. However, the Division also wanted to assure supply teachers that their assignments have been designed to reflect the duties of a teacher and align with their professional expertise. This may mean that substitutes may be doing work previously assigned to an educational assistant but which still falls under the rubric of what is "teacher work."

If there are questions relating to the tasks or "work" being directed to complete, or if a teacher believes the work is unsafe or lacks the necessary training and development to undertake the directive appropriately, they should **contact TES as soon as possible**.

. . . continued

As previously suggested, if you are assigned such work:

- A teacher should ask why they are being assigned to it and what other measures have been considered or attempted before coming to them to complete the task.
- Teachers should then ask if they are being directed to do the work.
- If they are, the Association strongly suggests that they follow the lawful order of the Division unless the teacher believes the work to be dangerous (from an Occupational Health and Safety perspective).
- The Association strongly suggests that teachers make their protest known to their principal, in writing, regarding the direction given and follow lawful orders of the Division to avoid future employment ramifications. *Each situation may require a different response and set of actions to resolve. Therefore, no one path or course of action can be provided.*
- Then, contracted teachers should keep track of any additional assigned time and contact TES for assistance.

It is undeniable that local teachers and school leaders are facing additional pressures as a result of the strike. This is what strikes do; they stress a system. They are meant to demonstrate the importance of the work removed by those acting. Quite simply, the more work that is done outside the striking group, the longer it may take for the disputing parties to resolve. Unfortunately, these situations are rarely simple. The work of a teacher is complex and many times there are tensions between what a teacher should be doing, their work given their education and expertise, and the work being assigned.

The current situation is particularly challenging for school leaders. Principals need to carefully balance the needs of their school and supporting their staff. By following the direction provided by the Division in their communication yesterday, they can ensure that messaging and direction is consistent with the position shared. This ensures that, wherever possible, substitute teachers are only undertaking work that would be considered to be teaching.

As the strike continues, it will be vitally important that all teachers, which include school leaders, are understanding and supportive of each other. These are not easy times to work in, nor are the decisions that are made.

During the CUPE action, members with questions or concerns about their roles and responsibilities as teachers should contact TES at 1-800-232-7208.

SDB/mjg/ejl

cc H J Quinn, Local President, Edmonton Public Teachers Local No 37

J C Schilling, President, The Alberta Teachers' Association

C N Glossop, G G Meeker, J J Procktor, District Representatives, Edmonton McMurray
TES Staff Officers