



Memorandum

The Alberta Teachers' Association

INFORMATION MEMO

Date 2024 09 13

To Members of the Fort McMurray Public and Catholic Teachers' Bargaining Units

From Sean D Brown, Coordinator, Teacher Employment Services

Re CUPE Labour Action in Fort McMurray Public and Catholic Schools

The Alberta Teachers' Association (Association) has been meeting with local and provincial Canadian Union of Public Employee (CUPE) officials regarding the potential labour action by their respective members employed at the Fort McMurray School Division and the Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate School Division (School Divisions). With over 250,000 public service members in negotiations this year, it is important that the unions work collaboratively since we all want the same thing: respect for the work that we do, working conditions that allow us to provide the best possible service and wages that catch up and keep up with inflation. Each one of these items directly benefit our communities where we live and work.

The Association wants to ensure our members have the most up-to-date and accurate information possible about the situation and are aware of their responsibilities during a labour action from another union.

Earlier this week, the CUPE locals employed at their School Divisions voted overwhelmingly to support a strike vote. The Association understands that strike notice will soon be served to their employer or has been issued very recently. The legal labour action will commence during the week of 2024 09 16. CUPE members could hold information pickets at the beginning and end of the school day, which may involve school days not starting or ending at the regular bell times. The purpose of these activities is to provide information to parents when they are dropping off and picking up their children. During the school day, the union will likely be conducting a work-to-rule campaign. This may see support staff members refusing to do tasks their union deems "extra." The union could also choose to do a full withdraw of services, which could result in picket lines at schools, similar to the information pickets that might be held at the start and end of school days.

These actions are meant to send a message to parents about the status of their bargaining and to seek for public assistance in finding their way to achieving a fair and reasonable settlement at the bargaining table. While the Association is not part of the decision-making process for how and what CUPE does, we are connected with the local and provincial

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leaders and will offer our support how and where we can.

The teachers at School Divisions will likely have questions about what they can and cannot do concerning CUPE's action and how they can show solidarity for action since the Association might be in a similar situation in the months ahead. The items below should serve as guidance for ATA members in the days and weeks ahead as CUPE works to get a deal that meets its members' needs.

1. Teachers are free to show solidarity and support for their CUPE colleagues but must do so in a professional and responsible manner.
2. Regardless of CUPE holding pickets, teachers are required and expected to report to work on the same schedule as they normally would and to continue with their regular duties and responsibilities.
3. During a teacher's unassigned time and their before/after school time, teachers can, at their personal choice, participate in the information pickets. It will be important for members to adhere to their assignable/instructional time responsibilities and not join in any activity that conflicts with those commitments.
4. Teachers should not be taking on the work of another bargaining unit. While the work of the CUPE members is not teacher work, the line is not as straightforward as some may think. In the case of custodial work, the delineation is much clearer that the work is not for a teacher. However, the work of support staff could be teacher work, especially if the work relates to the health and well-being of the child. Teachers should ask why they are being assigned the task and what other measures have been considered or attempted before coming to them to complete the work. Teachers should then ask if they are being directed to do the work. If teachers are directed, then the Association strongly suggests that they follow the lawful order of the Board and contact Teacher Employment Services for assistance.
5. CUPE leadership has asked for a sign of support on Tuesday by wearing purple. Subject to any dress code policies in the School Divisions, teachers are encouraged to show that support. However, the discussion of the labour action needs to be carefully managed around students and should be age appropriate. Like an individual's choice to join the information picket, should a teacher choose to wear purple to show support, they are free to do so.

Labour action can have a life of its own and is not easy, but it takes a concerted and sustained effort to make a difference. As a result, information coming from the Association to our members may change over the course of their action. We commit to keeping members as up to date as possible and will work with CUPE officials as well as your local president to ensure our members understand what is happening and know how they can support it.

Members with questions or concerns about their roles and responsibilities as teachers during the CUPE action should contact Teacher Employment Services at 1-800-232-7208.