

CUPE Ontario's education workers plan job action for beginning of school year

TORONTO, ON – Leaders of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), representing 55,000 education workers in Ontario's schools, voted overwhelmingly on the weekend in favour of escalating job actions to begin the first week of school.

Close to 400 CUPE delegates from across the province gathered in Toronto on August 29th to map out job action strategies for their first legal strike day of September 10th. Beginning with work-to-rule, the plan will gradually increase to rotating strikes and eventually ramp up to a full-scale province-wide strike.

Designed to increase pressure on the provincial government to provide more bargaining days, the weekend's job action meeting appears to have worked. "We heard from the government last week and they are now offering us more bargaining days," said Terri Preston, Chair of CUPE's Ontario School Boards Coordinating Committee.

"These additional days are a good sign," said Preston. "We've only had three so far. Now we have seven more, beginning August 30th and running till September 17th. This is really overdue. Our members have been without a contract for a year. We need to continue putting pressure on the government. Our education workers deserve respect."

CUPE Ontario's provincial leaders from all sectors were fully behind the job action plan. "We have 250,000 members across the province, in all sectors, from social services, to municipal staff, to health sector personnel and the universities, and they're backing the education workers all the way," said Fred Hahn, President of CUPE Ontario. "Our members are in every community, living and working with education workers. We're in this together, speaking with one voice. And it will be heard loud and clear."

Education workers include educational assistants, office administrators, custodians, tradespeople, instructors, library technicians, early childhood educators, IT specialists, speech pathologists and many others. They help keep the schools safe, clean and well organized while providing extra support to ensure all students have the opportunity to reach their potential.

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