

School Board Local Leaders and Members in Ontario

I have been hearing from a number of you in recent days, about your situation in bargaining and our upcoming National Convention.

First, let me say how proud I am to be in CUPE, with all of you. The solidarity and strength you have all demonstrated, in the last six weeks since beginning the work to rule campaign, is amazing.

Your efforts have highlighted the importance of our member's work in schools across the province, and have forced the provincial government to pay attention to CUPE education workers.

This has been one of the most challenging rounds of bargaining ever in our entire union in Ontario. And you are undertaking the largest legal job action in CUPE National's history.

Today, with the Premier laying down ultimatums in her press conference, the challenge can appear even bigger. She may think trying to bully our members will succeed, but I know she is wrong.

Because I know all of you. I know in the face of threats you'll continue standing strong in the workplace, strong in support of our central bargaining committee, strong in the demand for Respect for education workers.

I also know how the timing of this conflicts with the upcoming CUPE National Convention, where I will be offering for the position of National President. I have heard from many of you real expressions of regret at the coincidental timing of these two events.

I get it. I join you in that.

But I want you all to know that I also understand and support the roles that you all have as leaders in your locals and in the sector. I understand the times you and our school board members are in. And I understand where you need to be as leaders if this situation escalates in the next week— and that's not Vancouver, it's with your members here at home.

Please accept my humble gratitude for the many, many expressions of support for my campaign for National President. The support of your sector has always meant so very much to me. It would be wonderful to be with you at our National Convention and I know a number of Locals have made arrangements to have local members not directly involved in bargaining or bargaining mobilizing there to help determine the future of our National union in Vancouver.

But trust me when I say, I know you can't be in two places at once.

And please know, that if there is any escalated job action that our members are forced to take as a result of the actions of schools boards or the provincial government while the National Convention is on, I will come back from Vancouver to be with you, on the front lines, because that is where I belong.

Stay strong and united my friends. The work that our members do to ensure the success of students and school communities is too important to do otherwise. You deserve respect and I was proud today to demand it from the Premier and the Minister of Education on your behalf.

In Solidarity, Fred