

CUPE COMMUNIQUE

Canadian Union of Public Employees **CUPE.ca**

For Immediate Release

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CUPE education workers vote 97.5% to strike; government must negotiate fair agreement to lift school support staff out of poverty

HALIFAX -- CUPE School Support workers across Nova Scotia have voted 97.5% in favour of taking strike action if an agreement that lifts education workers out of poverty cannot be reached. Most CUPE education workers earn less than Nova Scotia's median wage of \$35,000 per year.

"We are underpaid, understaffed, and undervalued, and it is clear from the strike mandate we received that members will not accept this situation any longer," said Nova Scotia School Board Council of Unions President Chris Melanson. "We are holding a province-wide Day of Action today to tell government that our members need to see a deal that will make a meaningful difference in their lives."

From 2012 to 2022, while inflation in Nova Scotia increased by 23.5%, wages in the sector rose only 14.5%, dragged down by years of legislated restraint under the previous Liberal government. Education workers' pay is now worth nearly 10% less than it was a decade ago, and prices have only gone up.

"Our members drive children to school, keep the libraries open, work one-on-one with students, repair equipment, ensure recess and lunch times run smoothly, keep school facilities clean, provide safe learning spaces and administer clerical tasks – but staff are leaving the sector in droves to find better-paying work elsewhere," said Melanson. "Government needs to connect the dots, because without meaningful changes to wages, they've got a staffing crisis on their hands."

Nova Scotia Education Workers are wearing pink today as part of a province-wide Day of Action.



CUPE Local 5050 members Darlene Sullivan, cleaner, and Mallory Axworthy, teacher aid, at a rally in Sydney, Tuesday, Feb 28, 2023 (Steve Wadden)



CUPE Local 2722 members rally outside MLA Colton LeBlanc's office in Tusket, Tuesday, Feb 28, 2023 (Aaron Pottier)

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