

January 17, 2020

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OSBCU
UPDATE ON
TEACHERS'
JOB ACTION

**To: Local Presidents and Executives, Bargaining Committees and Membership.
*** Please share with CUPE local members only *****

Update from OSBCU to presidents regarding job actions by teachers' unions

All four major teachers' unions in Ontario – OSSTF, ETFO, OECTA and AEFO – are now engaged in job action, as they seek to settle new collective agreements with the province and council of trustees' associations.

Members of these unions were very supportive of CUPE members during our central negotiations. Now it's our turn to support them, because their fight is our fight – for high quality education that's publicly funded and publicly delivered.

We can show our co-workers and fellow unionists that CUPE education workers stand in solidarity with them and that we share their commitment to resist any demands that hurt services and hurt students. In fact, several CUPE school board locals will soon be in conciliation and in a possible strike situation themselves. Standing with teachers now will only strengthen our position with those employers.

Upcoming job action in the education sector

- OECTA will begin province-wide one-day strikes beginning January 21; this will impact all English Catholic Elementary and Secondary school. Work-to-rule action started January 13. www.catholicteachers.ca
- ETFO escalated its work-to-rule action on January 13. Its members will hold one-day strikes on January 20 (Toronto, York and Ottawa-Carleton public boards); and on January 21 (Grand Erie, Trillium Lakelands, Renfrew and Superior-Greenstone boards). www.etfo.ca

- AEFO will begin working to rule on January 16. This will impact elementary and secondary schools in both French public and French Catholic school systems. www.aefo.on.ca
- OSSTF is continuing with its work-to-rule action and rotating one-day strikes, with walkouts planned in nine boards for January 21. www.osstf.on.ca

Notes on supporting Work to Rule Actions

CUPE members must respect our colleagues' strike action and not performing their work during their job action. We should not take on additional tasks and act as we wanted our colleagues to act during CUPE/OSBCU's work-to-rule.

CUPE/OSBCU local presidents are encouraged to speak to district presidents from the teachers' unions about what support they are hoping to receive from us. With this information, presidents should be holding meeting with their boards' HR departments to discuss the job actions and the impact they will have on their membership.

NB: if members are directed to perform a task, refusing it can be considered insubordination. However, employers should not be asking our members to do the work of another bargaining unit; the language that protects us against this is typically found in the scope clause in your collective agreement. Members should carry on performing their regular duties and, if they are given a task they don't normally do, they should let their local know immediately.

Presidents are encouraged to ask employers to postpone events that would involve our members and teaching colleagues. For example:

- Kindergarten open houses: OSBCU's position is that DECEs and kindergarten teachers are teaching partners and we must support them by refusing to take part in kindergarten open houses, just as many curriculum nights were canceled this past fall when CUPE/OSBCU members were working to rule.
- Field trips: teachers are no longer taking students on field trips. This task should not be taken on by CUPE members
- Collecting money: teachers are no longer collecting money, but if that task is always done by CUPE members (e.g. office secretary, EAs, ECEs) outside work-to-rule, then collecting money may continue.

Notes on support for picket lines

Presidents are encouraged to speak to district presidents to find out the scope of the picketing and whether there will be pickets at all schools, education centres only, or at MPPs' offices. This information will be helpful in providing your members with information on what will be happening in your schools.

In some of our public boards, CUPE members may be deployed to other schools, especially if schools are remaining open. For example, EAs and secretaries from elementary schools may be redeployed to secondary schools or vice versa.

Members should be encouraged to support lines before and after their workday and during unpaid breaks. Please make sure take picture of the solidarity and forward them to the OSBCU.

Should a member not feel safe to cross a picket line the following protocol should be followed:

- Inform your supervisor that you feel that your personal safety is at risk if you cross the picket line and give the reason why; collect or record any possible evidence that will support your claim.
- Inform your steward and local president of your concerns and your action.
- Be prepared for follow-up action by your board, including possible disciplinary action.

Your OSBCU Executive and CUPE National Staff is available to provide support, assistance and a listening ear as we work through these issues.

Because of the me-too clause in our central agreement and the impact that increased class sizes will have on the physical space of the schools – and how those needs are met – teachers’ negotiations have an impact on us. It’s in our own interest to support job action by the teachers’ unions. But more importantly, supporting our colleagues’ job action demonstrates our commitment to the principles of solidarity and to high-quality education in Ontario. It’s also an opportunity to build relationships of trust and mutual respect with our teacher colleagues. Those relationships will be part of the foundation for making gains for education workers in the future.

In Solidarity,



Laura Walton
President, OSBCU

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