

CUPE COMMUNIQUE

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

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CUPE demands solutions to violence issue now, not after the election

Halifax-Kijipuktuk – Contract negotiation for 5,000 workers across Nova Scotia has been suspended, leaving urgent issues on the table and communities across the province in limbo as the province heads into the upcoming snap election.

The Nova Scotia School Board Council of Unions (NSSBCU) locals were told this week that the seven Regional Centres for Education (RCEs) and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) were directed to halt any bargaining during the election period, by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). All scheduled bargaining dates in November have been cancelled.

“We are at a critical point in negotiations,” said Nelson Scott, Chair of the NSSBCU and President of CUPE 5050, at the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional Centre for Education. “School support staff have sent a strong message that they are willing to strike if we don’t resolve these issues.”

Just last week the NSSBCU, which includes the presidents of the eight CUPE locals representing school support staff in Nova Scotia, announced the result of province-wide strike votes with members in this sector with 94% of votes in favour of possible strike action.

Issues left on the table include wages, high workloads, understaffing—all risk factors for workplace violence, another major issue in this round of negotiations.

“It’s frustrating,” continued Scott. “Violence in schools is a serious issue not only for members, but also students and our wider school communities. The fact that RCEs and CSAP do not want to move forward with the solutions on the table says that they do not see tens of thousands of violent incidents a year as an urgent issue for Nova Scotia.”

CUPE Nova Scotia is calling for negotiations to be resumed, and for the EECD, RCEs and CSAP to continue bargaining and work with us to immediately implement solutions to address the crisis of violence in schools and achieve a contract for school support staff.

“We have invited government to come to the bargaining table and work toward solutions with our employers, but they have refused,” said Scott. “Now they choose to intervene by telling our employers to stop bargaining, to the detriment of our school support staff and students. How does this help our schools? How does this help our province?”

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