

news



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N O V A S C O T I A T E A C H E R S U N I O N

Date: June 13, 2023 **For Release:** Immediately **Contact:** Mark Laventure
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The following is an OP-ED from NSTU President Ryan Lutes

Education Workers Strike is Impacting Students and Educators

The CUPE Local 5047 strike has gone on for more than 4 weeks. It's been more than 4 weeks that students, teachers, and kids have been losing out on critical supports. It's been more than 4 weeks that our CUPE education workers in the Halifax Region have been fighting for a fair contract.

While schools in the Halifax Regional Centre for Education remain open, they are but shadows of what they once were.

Firstly, there are approximately 600 students, our most vulnerable students, who are not able to be in school on a full-time basis. And the children that can be at school are not receiving the support from those who are trained, and who have developed deep relationships with them.

Secondly, without our amazing CUPE education workers, teachers are being pulled from their regular students or duties to help support those students who should be receiving CUPE support. Without these critical workers, our teachers are being stretched too thin, and in the end, it is all students that are suffering the consequence.

The job of the school system is to ensure the success of all children. Our schools, even before the strike, were under-resourced and now, without over 1800 CUPE workers, it's extremely apparent that a significant number of students are not being supported. Schools may be open, but they are chaotic and school staff are being stretched and broken because of it.

Our children are without their librarians, their educational program assistants, assistive technology support workers, early childhood educators, African Nova Scotia and Mi'kmaq support workers, and many other supports. What kids are losing out here? It is our most vulnerable students that are generally supported by our CUPE colleagues. It's our most vulnerable kids that need them to succeed and shine.

While I don't know all the specifics of the negotiations between government and CUPE, what I, and all 9500+ members of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union do know, is that any human that is so critical to the success of a child deserves that the value of that work is recognized in a fair collective agreement. They deserve to be able to put a roof over their head, and food on the table

without working 2-3 jobs. They deserve to be respected and compensated fairly for their incredible work.

Mahatma Gandhi famously said that “the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.”

Our CUPE education workers are our most vulnerable workers, who are charged with the responsibility of supporting our most vulnerable students.

We can do better. Our government can do better and our society can do better. We have the chance to show that our government cares about the folks that support our most vulnerable students.

On behalf of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, I call on government to recognize the important role CUPE educational workers have in our public school system, so that all of our school communities can end this school year united.

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