



Canadian Union of Public Employees
Local 3550

Budget Presentation to
Edmonton Public Schools
Board of Trustees

March 7, 2017

Board Chair Draper;

Trustees;

Superintendent Robertson;

Staff Members;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good afternoon. I am Carol Chapman, President of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3550 – Edmonton Public Schools Support Staff. Joining me today is 1st Vice-President, Janis Zielke; Chief Steward, Gloria Lepine; Treasurer, Linda Harris; and Recording Secretary, Mabel Ong. As the public board meetings are now held during school hours, the other elected executive officers and other members of CUPE Local 3550 are at their workplaces supporting the students of Edmonton Public Schools.

All staff groups working together make Edmonton Public Schools a positive learning environment for students. CUPE Local 3550 members are proud members of the Edmonton Public School team of Maintenance and Distribution workers, Custodians, Teachers, Exempt and Support Staff.

Over 2,700 permanent full-time, part-time and hourly dedicated support staff education workers play critical roles in student learning, student safety and business administration in our district sites every day. We believe we are an integral part of the positive experiences and successes of the students in our District.

CUPE Local 3550 continues to work with the Staff Relations department to solve issues and provide support to the District and the members of the Local as we attempt to resolve difficult situations. The open communication and cooperative relationship we have is much appreciated. We continue to work with Employee Health Services to support our members who are experiencing medical challenges and a safe and successful return to work.

Workload:

I have spoken for many years about our concerns regarding workload. More and more of our members are contacting us about workload issues and the negative impact on their health and well-being.

The cost is two-fold:

- overworked and stressed members pay with lack of job satisfaction and personal health issues. The pressure of learning a position for new staff takes time and often efficiency comes with experience. However, the workload does not shrink to allow them the time to learn and grow into the position. Experienced staff are also sharing their frustrations. Many are 'donating' their time to get the work done and to try to maintain some sanity. Many are frustrated as they feel the high-quality work they want to provide to the District is impossible. Absenteeism for personal health reasons is often a result of the increased pressures of their job.

- the District pays with lower employee satisfaction and performance, and for increased sick leave benefits and replacement staff costs.

Determining the appropriate level of support staffing is complex because of the diverse needs and size of our District sites. We ask again for an opportunity to discuss with Administration ways to identify and address workload issues.

Professional Development:

In every budget presentation, I speak about our Staff Development Department and programs.

Professional development is critical to ensure the success of our staff who provide daily supports for our students and administration. Both the Supply Staff Orientation program and the Administrative Assistant training program have grown. These programs are critical for succession planning. The continuation of these programs and the increased supports provided by the Administrative Assistant Mentors and Educational Assistant Mentors are critical to ensure the support staff who have chosen to work for Edmonton Public Schools succeed and thrive.

The Best Practices Network groups for Office staff, Library Technicians and Science Technicians have been somewhat successful. However, participation is often difficult due to conflicts with school needs. As an educational institution, we do understand the importance of sharing 'Best Practices' and peer support. The District has approved 5 professional development days during the school year. We suggest that the Best Practices and Network groups meetings be scheduled on the District-wide PD days at least 3 half days per year. This will provide meaningful professional development to support participation in an organized fashion as there are no students on those days. Best Practices and Networking Groups for Educational Assistants are being developed. This will allow support staff to experience the benefits of time spent in training and sharing best practices with their colleagues. Our hope is that the value of such groups is recognized within the district.

We have had conversations with Administration over a period of time about developing an Educational Assistant training program in our District. We hope that this can be made a priority in the 2017 - 2018 school year. The development of such a program is complex and does not happen overnight. Our student population continues to grow as do the supports required to help them be successful. Edmonton Public students with complex and diverse learning needs will certainly benefit from working with well-trained Educational Assistants.

Teachers and Exempt staff at Edmonton Public Schools have opportunities provided for professional growth through targeted PD funds. CUPE Local 3550 is asking again for a Professional Development Fund to be utilized by District Support Staff. Such a fund would benefit the District and members long term, by providing career planning and specialized training and development. The result would be a highly educated and effective employee group within the District.

The Staff Development department will need continued support and resources to adequately address the increased demands of professional development for support staff and other staff groups.

District Software:

Software programs are available to help with effective use of time and accessing information. We are pleased that the District has implemented a professional development registration software system and on-line calendar.

The demands on the staff in Edmonton Public Schools Recruitment department to screen and hire staff has increased considerably and become more complex with increased student population and more schools to support this growth. On-line application systems and/or software programs designed to screen resumes are available. Use of these applications would certainly help with the efficiency of our staffing department who manually review every application received.

I have spoken before about the differences in recruiting support staff during 'boom times' and during a recession in this province. Most of the positions for Support Staff in our District are less attractive than other sectors as they are considered precarious, part-time and seasonal jobs. During a recession, workers are reminded of the instability of private sector jobs and look to public service for employment opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share what we, the support staff of Edmonton Public Schools believe to be important points for schools, central departments and the Board to consider when developing the 2017 - 2018 Proposed Budget and for long term planning for Edmonton Public Schools.

We believe that the current government recognizes the need for adequate, sustainable, predictable funding for Public Education. Also, there is recognition of the need for building new schools and the modernization of existing schools.

We thank you for your work as strong advocates for K-12 Public Education. The Student Senate, support of Gay-Straight alliances, and your advocacy for public dollars for public education are a few examples. Your work to support the diversity and inclusion of students is critical for the development of our future workers and leaders.

Again, thank you for your time.

Carol Chapman,
President, CUPE Local 3550