

# EMPLOYERS: ONTARIO STUDENTS AND WORKERS DESERVE ACTION!

**CUPE school board locals are calling on the employer and elected school board trustees to take the following actions in support of students and workers in public education.**

- Contact the Minister of Education (and the Ministry of Education) to express the need for additional funding for Ontario school boards to hire more education workers across all classifications to support students and their learning environments.
- Commit to working at the central and local bargaining tables to reach collective agreements that include measures to increase staffing levels and improve supports for students, reduce violent incidents, and create well-paying, secure and sustainable jobs at school boards.

## BACKGROUND:

- There is an underfunding crisis in Ontario school boards. In 2025-26 alone, the real per-pupil cut to education funding is \$1.4 billion.
- Last year, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives calculated the cumulative real per-pupil cut under the Ford government as \$6.3 billion over the period of the Ford Progressive Conservative government (2018-19 to 2024-25)
- Despite government claims of “historic investments”, student to staff ratios have not improved since 2018, and for many classifications, student to staff ratios have worsened.
- Based on school boards’ financial documents, from the 2018-19 to 2024-25 school years, staffing ratios have worsened for several classifications of workers, including:
  - Designated Early Childhood Educators
  - School Secretaries/Administrative Support Staff
  - Speech Services
  - Psychological Services
  - Library Technicians
  - Custodians
  - Maintenance/Trades
- In a recent survey of CUPE education workers, almost 85% said that more staff in all classifications at school boards are needed to improve supports for students and meet student needs. The government and school boards are going in the wrong direction. More funding dedicated to hiring more education workers is needed, and fast.

# THE IMPACT OF UNDERFUNDING ON STUDENTS AND WORKERS:

- Underfunding has led to an acute understaffing crisis in which students' needs are not being met, education workers have excessive and unreasonable workloads, and violence in schools has been on the rise.
  - 84% of education workers at Ontario school boards feel stress due to an excessive workload.
  - 54% of education workers say they do unpaid work for their school board because there are not enough staff – subsidizing Ontario school boards by approximately **1355.5 Full-Time Equivalent jobs**.
  - 75% of education workers say they experience violent or disruptive incidents in their work area at least sometimes. Educational Assistants (EA) and Child and Youth Workers (CYW) experience the highest rates, with 96% saying they experience violence in the workplace.
- **Over 70% of CUPE education workers across the province are women.** Issues of rising violence, staffing shortages, impending job cuts, and low incomes for education workers impact women particularly hard. Any government strategy to address gender inequality must include a strategy to address these problems in Ontario schools.

## PROBLEMS AT ONTARIO SCHOOL BOARDS

- **There is a crisis of rising violence in schools.** School boards are not addressing this crisis, which is harming students and education workers alike. A significant cause of rising violence is too few staff to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities.
- Based on a recent survey of CUPE school board members, **73% of Educational Assistants (EAs) support 5 or more students** – up from 60% in 2018. 95% of EAs say there are students at their schools who need the support of an EA but do not receive that support. 93% of EAs say they sometimes have to choose between two or more students who need their support at the same time. 88% of EAs say they work with students who need one-on-one support but who do not receive it.
- Student to Designated Early Childhood Educator (DECE) ratios have worsened since 2018-19. 42% of DECEs who say there are students with exceptionalities in their classes also identify that those students do not have an EA assigned to work with them. **On average, DECEs at Ontario school boards do 41 minutes of unpaid prep work each day.**
- 77% of school secretaries have had duties downloaded to them over the past 5 years. **On average, these tasks have added over 71 minutes per day to secretaries' workload.** Over 94% of school secretaries say they regularly have to spend part of their day catching up on duties they were unable to complete the previous day. 61% say it happens every day.
- **41% of custodians say there are areas of their school that are not cleaned daily.** 70% say there are times when they are unable to complete all of their duties because there is too much work and not enough staff.
- **78% of IT staff say their workload has increased over the past 5 years.** Almost 70% said they are sometimes required to work with IT devices or IT infrastructure that is outdated or insufficient to the needs of students.