

How to Fight Cuts to Jobs and Services in Schools:

A guide for CUPE Education Local Union Executives

Our schools need more staff, not less. When cuts happen or are on the horizon an urgent union response is necessary. This is not the time for a “let’s wait and see” approach.

Here are some recommended steps for local executives to organize member and parent pressure on school board employers and PC MPPs to fight cuts to jobs and services.

- 1. As soon as your local leadership becomes aware of potential job cuts, notify your National Representative, OSBCU Area VP and Mobilization Officer.** Call an emergency local executive meeting to discuss the importance of an urgent response, develop a fightback plan, and delegate tasks.
- 2. Review the collective agreement and Employment Standards Act** and ensure local leaders are familiar with members’ rights to notice, redeployment, severance, recall, etc.
- 3. Tell your members as soon as possible about confirmed as well as potential job cuts.** Using the draft text provided below, send a member bulletin with information about the job cuts and impacts on members and students. Validate members’ workplace experiences and direct their anger to school board employers and the Ford Government. The Ford Government has cut \$6.3 billion from public education since 2018-19, and far from pushing back on them, school boards are implementing those cuts.
- 4. Call a Special General Membership meeting. Organize workplace actions.**
 - Ensure that members understand the urgency of our fightback. Without clear resistance from local unions, school boards and the government will be further emboldened to make more cuts.
 - The first step is to invite members to share how the job cuts will affect the workers laid off, workload for the remaining staff, and the learning environment for students. Collect these “impact stories” through work site leaders and summarize them in an agitational workplace bulletin on the CUPE bulletin boards. Through this workplace activity and two-way conversations, you can build members’ confidence and visible union opposition to cuts.
 - Ask members to participate in visible and collective actions in the workplace and broader community to pressure the employer and PC MPPs and to bring parents with them. The local’s strike pledge action targeting the employer and PC MPPs is one such important example of a visible action to apply pressure.

- Reach out to your OSBCU Area Mobilization Officer for support. Use the **Step-by-Step Guide** on the OSBCU website to organize a local strike pledge action: <https://osbcu.ca/resources/delegation-resources/>

5. Organize parent actions against the cuts. Include other locals in the area and the local labour council.

- Organize a virtual or in person parent information session to talk with parents about the cuts to jobs and impact on students. Start by inviting parents within the local membership.
 - i. Task site leads with asking members to invite parents/caregivers from among their contacts.
 - ii. Ask your local labour council executive to ask council affiliates to invite their members, many of whom are parents/caregivers with students impacted. Ask to make a presentation at the next labour council meeting.
 - iii. Share with parent groups on social media including Ontario Parents for Education Support.
- Use the parent flyers and OSBCU petition to talk with parents: <https://osbcu.ca/templates/>
- Set aside 15 minutes at the info meeting to ask parents to call their MPP and text 5 other parents to ask them to do the same. Give them a script, see below. If the meeting is in person, ask parents to sign the OSBCU petition calling on the Ford Government to increase funding for staff.

6. Work with your National Representative and Communications Representative to put out a media release to amplify your actions and to share the impact stories.

Draft text for member bulletin about job cuts:

Subject: Member alert: Important information about (potential) job cuts

Dear Local **XXXX** members:

The employer has notified the Local Executive that there will be (or may be) cuts to **[insert a description of the cuts to jobs]** on or around **[insert the timeline for the cuts]**.

These cuts come at a time when our members are already overworked and burnt out. The Ford government has consistently cut funding to public education at the cost of workers and students. Our workloads are worse than ever. Student and school needs are higher. Workers and students need more staff in schools, not less.

Even though the funding decisions are made by the Ford government, **[name of the school board]**'s compliance with the cuts is unacceptable. The stakes are too high for the future of **[name of district/geographic area]** to remain silent.

Your CUPE **[local number]** Executive Team is clear that it is our priority to organize against these cuts. The local executive is developing a fightback plan which will be shared in the coming days. At that stage, your work site leaders/Contract Action Team members will be able to provide more details. Each member's participation in the plan is critical.

Please make every effort to attend the Special General Membership meeting on:

[Date/Time/Location]

Draft script for calls to MPP's:

"Hi, my name is **[insert name]** and I'm a parent with kids at **[insert school board]**. I'm also a constituent in your riding. I'm calling because I'm concerned about the cuts to **[insert info about job cuts]**. I'm asking you to commit publicly to stop the cuts to jobs at **[name of school board]**."