

December 21, 2021

Individual letters sent to all Trustees and edited for DDSB Trustees as necessary

Dear,

I/we are representatives of Local 218 Canadian Union of Public Employees and we are writing on behalf of the members who are education workers at the Durham Catholic District School Board,

CUPE Local 218 are custodians, maintenance staff, educational assistants, clerical staff, LINC/ESL Instructors, and IT technicians. In short, we are the people who keep schools open.

We write with concerns that you may not have heard before from the perspective of education workers, but we believe they are concerns you will share. I/we outline them below in the hope that action can be taken in both the short- and long-term to resolve these issues.

Staffing: A lack of funding, lack of staffing, excessive workload and worker burnout are all problems that prevent education workers from providing the support and services that students deserve. There is little to no consistency with the DCDSB's PELI system which provides physical and educational support to students in need.

Budget: When the board finally posted their financial statements in November, we were shocked to see that the DCDSB reported a surplus of \$5 million. With not back filling Educational Assistants and Custodial staff, the DCDSB has been able to achieve this surplus on the backs of their employees. These are dollars that could have and should have been invested in staffing to support services for students. For example, DCDSB cannot supply enough technology to staff and students and claims a lack of funds, yet its financial statement indicates otherwise. There is a serious need for additional Educational Assistants in the work place which would benefit the health and safety of students and employees.

Violence in schools: Violence against education workers is a long-standing problem, and was most recently documented in the report *In Harm's Way* by researchers from the University of Ottawa. At DCDSB, staff continue to be verbally and physically attacked and injured by students and practices like "in-school suspensions" are making the problem worse. CUPE 218 has also tracked DCDSB's Violent Incident Reports from September to December 2021 and has found an increase of 47% since the last school year. In three months, there has been close to 300 Violent Incidents Reports submitted.

Toxic Environment: We are seeing an increase of aggressive supervision especially in the maintenance department. The morale is at an all-time low, with increasing concern that leads us to bring this to your attention.

Labour Relations: Although we recognize that COVID-19 has had a negative impact in ways that none of us could ever imagined; respectfully the union should not have to continuously chase the board for replies or responses.

Health and Safety: Understaffing, underfunding, baseline PPE and workplace violence leave CUPE education workers at risk, with our employer seemingly unwilling to take measures to protect them. The board has an alarming number of employees on LTD and WSIB. The Boards' general disregard for health and safety is a poor example to staff and students.

I hope that, rather than view this letter as a laundry list of complaints, you will take the opportunity to examine the concerns we raise not only in the light of their impact on education workers, but on the quality of education that students receive in DCDSB schools.

DCDSB should be investing in the faith based educational experience that includes religious educational services that ensure a high-quality education for students in safe, well supported schools. We hope to meet with you to discuss the ways that CUPE Local 218 and DCDSB trustees can make them happen.

Sincerely,



Dennis Gibbs
President, CUPE 218
