



Our education system at risk: Background on issues in Education

Investing in the education of our children is one of the most important things our government can do.

In Saskatchewan, there are growing concerns about what the approximately \$260 million provincial budget deficit will mean for school boards across the province.

Though the premier has said education will see a ‘modest’ increase, many school boards are being told to budget for the worst case scenario.

Many school divisions are already feeling a budget pinch. Many school boards are dealing with increased enrollment and more complex student needs. Even a modest increase will not be enough for some school divisions to meet the need for frontline support staff.

And when education support staff get cut, it’s our children who suffer.

Impact of funding challenges on CUPE members

Several CUPE locals are already experiencing challenges.

- Prairie Spirit School Division has a \$3 million shortfall and plans to cut at least 60 educational assistants from CUPE Local 4254 and some teaching staff.
- Prairie South School Division has announced it is laying off 25 school assistants and reducing hours for even more CUPE 5512 members.
- Chinook School Division will cut five educational assistants from CUPE Local 4754 and will have more to come from through attrition.
- Saskatchewan Rivers School Division is planning to reduce three paid working days from all 10-month support staff in CUPE Local 4195.
- Regina Public Schools announced it is going to start charging parents for lunch time supervision, resulting in a negative impact for parents and CUPE Local 3766 members.
- Saint Paul’s Catholic School Division in Saskatoon is negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding with CUPE Local 3730 members to reduce \$1.80/hour of pay (8%) for head caretakers who do not have their fireman’s certificate. Currently this will affect 10 members and another six future members once the new P3 schools are operational. The new P3 schools do not require head caretakers as the private company owning the school will be responsible for the HVAC system.

- The Holy Trinity Catholic School Division could face an \$800,000 shortfall in next year's budget and is looking at cuts.
- Many CUPE locals are reporting that educational assistants are now being required to perform medically invasive procedures to students. These jobs had previously been done by specialist support staff and/or nurses. Some locals are reporting that their educational assistants receive little to no training on how to perform the medically invasive procedures to students.

Impact of funding challenges on the public

The proposed cuts and changes that we already know about will have real consequences for children, placing both the quality of education and the safety of children and workers at enormous risk.

There are more and more students in our schools who have unique needs, whether those needs are medical, behavioural, or if they just need extra academic support. Vulnerable students need an increased number of dedicated educational assistants, not fewer, to successfully integrate into the school system.

With fewer supports for vulnerable students, all students feel the consequences. There is simply no way you can slash the staff dealing with special needs students, slash the workers keeping our schools clean and safe and running smoothly and expect the same quality of education for our kids.

Budget considerations should never come before the rights to a quality education for our children, especially children with diverse needs.

Taking Action

These challenges are just the tip of the iceberg. We need to act now to ensure our education system fully supports all of our children.