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CUPE 5678 Condemns Deep Staffing Cuts at Upper Canada District School Board Amid Ongoing Staffing Crisis

BROCKVILLE, ON - CUPE 5678 and the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU) strongly condemn the Upper Canada District School Board's decision to move ahead with significant staffing cuts despite a crisis in understaffing and growing student needs across the board.

The board recently notified the local that it plans to eliminate 31.32 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, including Early Childhood Educators, Instructional Assistants, Link Instructors, ESL Instructors, and a Settlement Outreach Worker position. The cuts also include restructuring of the LIFT program, which provides additional academic and emotional support for students who are not formally identified with exceptionalities, but still require extra support.

CUPE 5678 represents approximately 1,650 full-time, part-time, and supply workers at the Upper Canada District School Board. Members include Educational Assistants, Secretaries, Registered Early Childhood Educators, Office Clerical staff, Custodians, Information Technology staff, Library Technicians and more.

"These cuts will be devastating for both students and education workers," said Jacob Casselman, President of CUPE 5678. "Our schools are already critically understaffed. Instead of investing in the supports students clearly need, the board is eliminating frontline workers who provide direct care, intervention, emotional support, and stability in our schools every single day."

These cuts are especially concerning given recent findings from the Ontario Auditor General's report on special education oversight, which included the Upper Canada District School Board. The report found inconsistent implementation and oversight of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), as well as failures to ensure students received the supports outlined in their plans and that families were not always provided the resources necessary to help their children succeed.

"That report confirms exactly what education workers at UCDSB have been saying for years: students need more support and more staff in schools — especially ECEs and frontline support workers — not less," said Casselman.

UCDSB education workers have witnessed a troubling pattern of silencing workers who raise concerns about staffing and funding. Last year, the board issued letters of reprimand to education workers who signed an e-action campaign calling for increased education funding and improved staffing levels at the Upper Canada District School Board.

"Our members were reprimanded simply for speaking up about the conditions students and workers are facing and pushing for better supports for students," Casselman said. "Now, after ignoring the voices of UCDSB education workers, the board is doubling down with even deeper cuts."

The OSBCU says these cuts reflect a broader pattern driven by chronic underfunding of education in Ontario since 2018.

"What we're seeing at UCDSB is part of a broader pattern, where education workers are being asked to pay the price for underfunding," said Joe Tigani, President of the OSBCU. "These are the people who support students with special needs, maintain safe schools and ensure schools function every day. Cutting these workers hurts everyone."

CUPE 5678 and the OSBCU are calling on the province to properly fund education and on the USDCB to immediately reverse these job cuts.

“Students deserve safe, supported learning environments,” Tigani said. “That starts with investing in the workers who make that possible. The OSBCU stands behind CUPE 5678 members as they fight back. We are united in defending good jobs, protecting vital services, and pushing back against a system that continues to undervalue education workers and the students they serve.”

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