



East Central Alberta Catholic Separate School Division
Serving the Communities of Castor, Provost, Vermilion, Wainwright, Stettler

February 24, 2025

Dear Parents and Guardians,

East Central Alberta Catholic Schools (ECACS) is committed to informing our school communities about the ongoing bargaining process with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 5352. While we respect the rights of our support staff to engage in job action, we recognize that this situation may impact students and families. ECACS remains dedicated to the bargaining process and continues to work toward a resolution that minimizes disruptions to student learning.

Background

In June 2024, ECACS successfully ratified a collective agreement with CUPE Local 5352, covering the period from September 1, 2021, to August 31, 2024. Negotiations for a new contract began with three bargaining sessions on October 30, 31, and November 1, 2024. Following these discussions, CUPE applied for formal mediation on November 20, 2024, which surprised ECACS, as mediation was not anticipated at this stage.

The bargaining teams met again on February 10, 2025, followed by mediation sessions on February 12 and 13, 2025. Shortly after these sessions, CUPE requested that the mediator issue a written report, officially ending mediation and triggering a mandatory 14-day cooling-off period.

ECACS recently tabled a 10% compensation increase over the next four years (3% in the first year, 3% in the second year, 2% in the third year, and 2% in the fourth year). Progress was made in addressing some of the union's outstanding issues; however, an agreement on monetary items could not be reached.

On February 21, 2025, CUPE Local 5352 applied to the Alberta Labour Relations Board (ALRB) to conduct a supervised strike vote scheduled for March 2 and March 3, 2025.

What This Means

If CUPE Local 5352 members vote in favour of a strike and the ALRB certifies the results, the union will be in a legal position to issue a 72-hour strike notice and withdraw services in schools.

ECACS' Commitment

ECACS remains committed to reaching a fair and reasonable agreement with CUPE Local 5352. We sincerely value the contributions of our support staff, including Educational Assistants, Learning Commons Facilitators, school office staff, computer technicians, and custodians. Their dedication is essential to student success and well-being.

The offer to return to the bargaining table remains open.

Impact on Student Learning

A strike could disrupt school operations and student learning. Our priority is to ensure that classrooms, schools, and offices remain safe, welcoming, and conducive to learning.

Contingency plans are in place to maintain school operations, though some programming adjustments may be necessary for students requiring additional support. Schools will communicate directly with affected families. Parents concerned about their child's specific needs are encouraged to contact their school administration for further information.

We appreciate the patience and understanding of our school communities, and we empathize with any concerns this situation may cause and will continue to provide updates as they become available. Please visit our website for the latest job action updates.

Yours in Catholic Education,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Taplin".

Jim Taplin
Superintendent