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Additional Pro-D days for Okanagan Skaha schools is a pay cut for education workers

OKANAGAN SKAHA - Considered changes by the board of School District 67 (Okanagan Skaha) to the school calendar would negatively impact education workers and students, says CUPE.

CUPE Local 523 barely averted a strike by reaching a settlement at the eleventh hour on December 2nd. Members however remain frustrated, and the Local is voicing opposition to moving five professional development days from August to be dispersed throughout the school year. The possible change would also add eight more minutes to each day to meet the required instruction time for students.

“We have just concluded a very difficult round of bargaining where CUPE education workers received a long overdue wage adjustment of 3.5%. If the changes to the school calendar go through that would mean 5 fewer days of work for our members, effectively a 2% pay cut,” said CUPE Local 523 Secretary-Treasurer Jose van Berkel. “Adding minutes to each day is sneaky way of meeting teaching requirements. Ultimately, students will be losing learning opportunities if days are removed from the calendar.”

CUPE education workers are some of the lowest paid public sector workers in British Columbia, earning on average \$24,000 per year. Unlike teachers, support staff are paid hourly from ‘bell-to-bell’ and often work unpaid in order to properly serve all students. CUPE Local 523 members have already lost work due to the two week long spring break in Okanagan Skaha schools.

“When you are just struggling to get by like the families of many CUPE members, losing another week of work is a big deal,” added van Berkel. “We are calling on the board to make sure education workers have the chance to provide the adequate support our children deserve.”

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Contact:

Jose van Berkel, CUPE Local 523, Secretary Treasurer: 250-490-7787
Rob Hewitt, CUPE National Servicing Representative: 250-859-1963
Nathan Allen, CUPE Communications: 604-338-2967