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CUPE's K-12 Presidents' Council meets to set provincial bargaining priorities

BURNABY—The presidents of CUPE's K-12 support staff locals met in Richmond Wednesday to discuss the progress of provincial bargaining, set key priorities, and identify the next steps towards securing a provincial settlement. CUPE K-12 Locals from around the province were well represented by over 50 presidents and local leaders.

At the meeting, the K-12 Presidents' Council made it clear that CUPE is committed to securing a provincial settlement that meets the needs of our members and improves services for students and schools. The Council empowered its K-12 Provincial Bargaining Committee to move forward on key priorities that include recognition and respect for Education Assistants, as well as improvements to job security, skills training, wages, benefits and the innovative programs of the Public Education Benefits Trust.

The CUPE BC K-12 Presidents' Council also unanimously empowered the Provincial Bargaining Committee to consider all necessary actions, up to and including a province-wide strike vote to secure a respectable settlement.

Bill Pegler, CUPE K-12 Coordinator and chief spokesperson, made it clear that K-12 members want a fair deal—and at this time, there is no strike vote planned. “The K-12 Presidents' Council empowered the Provincial Bargaining Committee to hold a strike vote only if necessary - if the employer doesn't move on key priorities,” said Pegler. “The K-12 presidents simply wanted to ensure that their Provincial Bargaining Committee had all the tools and options necessary to reach a settlement.”

During the full-day meeting, the presidents also heard from Michelle Waite, Chair of the CUPE Colleges Bargaining Council, and Colleen Garbe, Chair of the Universities Coordinated Bargaining Committee, to ensure CUPE's public education sector is coordinated and working in concert as bargaining moves forward.

CUPE's BC K-12 Presidents' Council brings together 55 locals to coordinate provincial bargaining priorities and strategy and raise the profile of the work that CUPE members perform in support of public education. CUPE's K-12 sector in B.C. includes over 26,000 school support staff in most of the province's 60 school districts. Our members work in every support role within the public school system, including bus drivers, trades professionals, education assistants, custodians and clerical staff.

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