



## Quick Update.....June 4th, 2021

Let's get right to it....

**School Resuming In June?!** - Nope. Online learning will continue for the remainder of this month and plans are being made by the Ministry of Education and school boards to figure out how to open safely and properly in September. Right now, we're not entirely sure what that will look like and like last year, I'm sure there will be many meetings and discussions over the next few months and as details become available on our positions as caretaking and maintenance staff, we will get that information out to you in a timely fashion. As for right now, there are things that we can be doing in all our schools to get a bit ahead of our summer cleaning routines now that we know students are not returning. Chairs can be scrubbed and stacked, walls can be washed, garbage cans rinsed out, student washrooms can be done top to bottom, chalkboards washed down, etc. Anything that doesn't involve touching personal belongings of students or staff can be done. I expect there to be a decision on staff and students returning to retrieve any personal belongings at some point within a couple days but understanding that the announcement was just made Wednesday, we don't have any information on that just yet.

**HEPA Filters** – Throughout the past year, air quality in classrooms has been an issue brought forward across the province by teaching staff and custodial/maintenance staff alike. Across the HWDSB, 134 HEPA filter units have been deployed across the board to Spec Ed classes and other high needs areas. The maintenance, filter changes and upkeep of these units according to the health and safety department of the HWDSB is the responsibility of our Maintenance team members. If caretaking staff notice that there is an issue with one of the units, please submit a work order through eBase to have it inspected to ensure that it is working properly for the safety of the staff and students in the room it has been assigned to.

**Education Funding Report** – A few days ago, a report was put out by the Financial Accountability Office outlining shortfalls in the funding of the Education system. We all know things haven't been funded properly in Education for a long time so this wasn't news to us, but seeing the numbers on paper were pretty staggering. OSBCU prepared a response to the report which I'll include at the end of the update.

**Your Wellness Matters** – It's been almost 15 months since the start of the pandemic and the toll on everyone's mental and physical well being has been enormous and we will keep seeing the effects for years to come. I know myself that some parts of the pandemic have hit me harder and I've had to try and adapt as well as I can to not fall into a negative space. There is help and assistance available to all employees of the HWDSB, no matter if you're casual, permanent or on probation. Our EAP (Employee Assistance Program) is run through LifeWorks and I'll attach information for them at the end of the update.

**Benefits** – (from last week and posting again) Once you gain a permanent position with the employer, you have benefits with the Education Workers Benefit Trust. The trust came into effect a few years ago and created a plan that had the same benefits for all OSBCU members across the province instead of individual school boards having plans for our members. Each year in accordance with our collective agreement, the government contributes a defined amount towards the benefits cost of each permanent member across the province. This year, that amount is \$5,599.45. If you have a permanent position and don't make use of your benefits package, that money is going to someone else. Bottom line is this – take some time to read through what our benefits are at [www.cupe-ewbt.ca](http://www.cupe-ewbt.ca) and start taking better care of yourself for your own sake and your loved ones too!

**OSBCU Caretaking Forum Meeting** - The second Caretaking Forum meeting will happen on Saturday June 19<sup>th</sup> on the Zoom meeting platform. All caretaking members in OSBCU from across the province are welcome to attend and participate in questions relating directly to caretaking issues. I took the time to attend the first meeting and it was good to discuss things we deal with every day with other members from other boards and it's always interesting to hear how things are done differently in other boards and maybe try to adapt things to our daily routines, and in some cases be glad our employer (while not perfect) is much better than others in some areas. If you'd like to participate, the details are listed for you below.

When: Jun 19, 2021 01:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada) Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/9101862825>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Some questions that we will be covering at the custodial forum:

- 1- Are you aware of contracting out of custodial work at your board and what actions can we take to eliminate it?
- 2- What actions can we take to better reach and communicate with our custodial colleagues?
- 3- What union training would members of this classification benefit from the most?
- 4- Do you feel you are respected at your worksite? On a sliding scale 1 would be no respect at all and 10 would be very respected. What actions can we take to obtain the respect we deserve for our classification?

I realize that for some of our members, we use a lot of different names and short forms for things that not everyone will understand because let's face it, not everyone cares about our union business. They just want to come to work, get paid and go home safely. So, I'll explain some of the short forms here so you know....

OSBCU – Ontario School Board Council of Unions – all CUPE locals in Ontario that are employed by school boards are part of OSBCU. We are a group of 55,000 education workers covering custodial, maintenance, EA's, ECE's, clerical, IT, librarians, speech pathologists and many more occupations. Each CUPE education local represents different groups. For instance, our Catholic board here in Hamilton has CUPE 3396 and represents EA's and other positions but not custodial or maintenance. When it comes to our contract, the OSBCU negotiates on behalf of all 55,000 members for half of our contract known as the Central Agreement. Those issues apply to all 55,000 members the same across the province and include issues like pay, sick leave and benefits.

EAP – Employee Assistance Program – is part of the Wellness department of the HWDSB. The employer has contracted with an outside company (LifeWorks) to provide counselling and help in many areas to employees in order to assist them in staying healthy in many areas. The service is at no charge to employees and is totally confidential – there is no documentation back to the employer about what is being discussed with LifeWorks staff. The services provided cover a wide area from personal and family counselling to helping with financial plans to diet advice.

CA – Collective Agreement – This is the document that we live and breathe by in the workplace. It's the rules and policies that both the Union and Employer go by in the workplace. Half of our Collective Agreement is negotiated by the OSBCU and applies to all 55,000 members across Ontario and the other half deals specifically with our own Local and the HWDSB. A copy of our latest CA should be in your Caretaking office for everyone to look at when needed and will expire in August of next year.

LTO or LTA – Long Term Occasional/Assignment - this is how we refer to casual members who are working in the same position for more than 12 days. In section C6 of the Central Agreement, any casual member in a position for more than 12 days begins to accrue sick leave. This is a great benefit for our casual members who normally wouldn't have any sick days at all. I won't go into all the details of LTO/A sick days but at it's most basic description, a casual working in an LTO/A accrues 0.9 days payable at 100% per month and 10 days at 90% per month. The math works out so that if a casual worked in an LTO/A for a period of 1 year, they would wind up with the same 11 days at 100% and 120 days at 90% that permanent employees are entitled to. So, if you are a casual and have been covering the same position for 4 months, you would have 3.6 days at 100% and 40 days at 90% of sick time available to you in case something happened.

EWBT – Education Workers Benefits Trust – is the big name for our benefits package as permanent employees. The EWBT was created to give OSBCU members more say in their benefits plans (which previously were arranged with their local school boards) and while it's not perfect by any means, I think it's worked out well for us as a whole. The administration of the EWBT is done through OTIP (see below) and the plan is insured through Canada Life. Enrollment is done automatically when you gain a permanent position by the employer sending information to OTIP, who notifies Canada Life that you are now covered. This usually takes a few weeks and new members should receive communication from OTIP that enrollment has been completed.

OTIP – Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan – is a big organization that does quite a few things for us. Most importantly, they administer the sign up and enrollment and eligibility of members for our benefits plan. They were chosen by OSBCU to handle this when the EWBT came into effect because they already had experience with records for all the teachers across the province, and hey, what's another 55,000 people to look after. Secondly, they have a business side to them as well that provides some benefits to us. They are an actual insurance broker company. As education workers, they provide discounts on insurance to us through other companies for home and auto insurance. I've shared with you before that I've saved hundred of dollars a year by getting a quote from them when my insurance company of 15+ years wanted to almost double my rates for no real reason. **You can get a quote from them at <https://www.otipinsurance.com/cupe4153> and get a free \$20 gift card just for getting a quote!**

I appreciate and applaud all of you for the work that's been done in our schools for the past 6 weeks while students have been learning remotely. I have heard updates and seen pictures of work getting done that we should all be very proud of. There's work that's been done that we haven't had time to do for years and our schools are better for it and it's given us a good start on having all our schools in the best possible shape they can be in for September. With the heat coming in this weekend, please be mindful of temperatures on their buildings next week if you don't have air conditioning. If it's too hot, make sure to stay hydrated and take a few more breaks outside or in a cooler area to keep yourself safe!

Be well, be safe and be happy!

Blake

## **STATEMENT**

### **“A government more committed to cuts than to kids” CUPE-OSBCU comment on FAO review of Ministry of Education’s spending plan**

**TORONTO, ON** – The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) responded to yesterday’s release of the review by the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO), which analyzed the Ministry of Education’s spending plan from the 2021 Ontario Budget and the 2021-22 Expenditure Estimates, with Laura Walton, president of CUPE’s Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU) offering the following comment:

Once again we have evidence that the Ford government is more committed to austerity than to properly funding education, only this time the proof comes from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO).

CUPE and OSBCU have said for years that since this government was elected that it was restraining spending at the expense of students and this review shows exactly that:

- The FAO projects that school board spending will increase by an average of 2.3% per year until 2029-30, but the government is only projecting an average increase of 1.2% per year. The total shortfall over the period from 2021-22 to 2029-30 will be \$12.3 billion.
- Even the FAO recognizes that this kind of shortfall requires the government to spend more or cut spending. And we know that this government will cut spending every time, unless there is a public outcry that makes them back down.
- Only \$623 million of the \$1.6 Billion in COVID-related funding this year comes from the Ministry of Education; the rest is coming from other ministries (procurement of PPE, etc.) and board reserves. Once again, Ministry is over-estimating its own spending.

Perhaps most galling is the final tally of transfer payments to parents during the pandemic: \$1.848 billion. This is more than the government provided in COVID-related funding for schools! It’s heartbreaking and infuriating to think what massive improvements this money could have made in the lives of students and workers over the past year. It certainly would have gone a long way toward preventing schools from becoming such a significant source of COVID spread, as the premier has said they were.

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retirement</li> <li>• Midlife</li> <li>• Student life</li> <li>• Legal</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Disabilities</li> <li>• Crisis</li> <li>• Personal issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parenting</li> <li>• Couples</li> <li>• Separation/divorce</li> <li>• Older relatives</li> <li>• Adoption</li> <li>• Death/loss</li> <li>• Child care</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Addictions</li> <li>• Fitness</li> <li>• Managing stress</li> <li>• Nutrition</li> <li>• Sleep</li> <li>• Smoking cessation</li> <li>• Alternative health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Career development</li> <li>• Work relationships</li> <li>• Work stress</li> <li>• Managing people</li> <li>• Shift work</li> <li>• Coping with change</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saving</li> <li>• Investing</li> <li>• Budgeting</li> <li>• Managing debt</li> <li>• Home buying</li> <li>• Renting</li> <li>• Estate planning</li> <li>• Bankruptcy</li> </ul>

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