



## **Members Update for August 31st, 2021**

### **Some super quick notes for you all.....**

Firstly, I was in a meeting with Carlos (CUPE National Rep), Flora, Peter, Jamie Nunn (HR Superintendent) and Dan Rutherford from HR yesterday and at the end of the meeting, Jamie Nunn made a point of wanting to thank everyone in CUPE 4153 for their hard work and going the extra mile to get the schools in tip top shape for this very important school opening. This opening is much different than any other for a number of reasons, most important of which is the mental health of returning students being in class with their friends and getting back to a regular routine. He was overwhelmed with all the positive social media posts from principals, teachers, EA's and others who came back into schools yesterday for the first time in months and were blown away by how clean things were, the extra attention to jobs we don't normally have the time to tackle, extra maintenance jobs that have been completed and the list goes on and on. I expect that in the coming days, there will be a board wide thank you to all of you for the work you've done but I wanted to relay his thoughts to all of you as encouragement in what is shaping up to be a very long week for some of us with ongoing construction and renovation projects still not completed.

Secondly, later today there will be a memo from the HR Dept going out to all staff giving an explanation about the 'board holiday' this Friday that only applies to certain worker groups – of which we are not included in. I've had a number of questions about this in the past week and when I reached out to a senior manager of the department last night, I was told there would be a memo coming out today.

Thirdly, as of 9pm last night (when I'm writing this) - I have yet to hear from Facilities and Finance members about my proposal to them for the enhanced cleaning positions. For transparency and being open with all of you, I'll explain what the hold up is. The HWDSB plan for the enhanced cleaning position this year was deeply flawed and held little to no benefit for any of our members. Last year, there was a designated amount of funding for the position.

This year, we learned by listening to the HWDSB Board meeting on Monday night last week that there was a pool of Covid related funding and it was sectioned off at the discretion of the HWDSB who chose to fund 22 positions. These 22 positions would be responsible for covering 88 elementary schools, leaving each position to cover 4 schools per day. That translates to about 90 minutes of cleaning per school per day. That's due to an 8 hour position, minus breaks and lunch and travel time split between 4 schools. From a health and safety perspective for all staff and students and the broader HWDSB community of families is unacceptable. Many of our schools had between 4 and 8 hours of enhanced coverage last year which allowed us to keep everyone as safe as possible. To reduce that to 90 minutes is not acceptable. Our request to the HWDSB was to find/release funding for another 22 positions to bring the total to 44 positions and that way each school would receive at least 4 hours if needed. The cost of the additional 22 positions would be a little greater than \$400,000 for the first 5 months of the school year. It's only 5 months for now since Ford and Lecce have only released Covid funding to school boards for the first 5 months because I guess they think it will all be gone by the end of January and life will be totally normal again. I know \$400,000 sounds like a lot of money to ask for, but for clarity the HWDSB budget approved by Trustees a few months ago was just under \$600 million dollars for the year. For now, an extra \$400,000 represents only 0.06% of the budget to add more personal safety to everyone who comes into our buildings. If the HWDSB doesn't agree with the request, I have no problem approaching local media to bring light to the situation and inform families of the decision to remove safeguards from the school system in the midst of rising numbers and other safety protocols like social distancing and masking still being in place. Hopefully I will hear sometime today about a decision on the request since the new funding is effective tomorrow.

There's still lots of unanswered questions for all of us this week and as the answers come to light, if it's not covered in an HWDSB email to all caretaking and maintenance staff, I'll be sure to share it with all of you to your personal emails. Please keep a close watch on your HWDSB emails for important memos and policies for this school year in the next few days and weeks.

If you have any questions that you're still unsure about and your area supervisor doesn't have an answer for you – please reach out to one of our stewards or Executive members and we will absolutely do our best to find the answer for you and share it as well so others know too. Please remember – some questions don't have an answer yet as the employer and all school boards are still waiting on information from the Ministry about certain issues.

Oh, and happy 1% raise day tomorrow. I'm hopeful that our next raise will be much more substantial than the last few have been.

Cheers,

Blake