

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 19, 2017

Cape Breton education workers devastated by layoff notices

Sydney – Twenty-eight education workers received layoff notices this week from their employer, the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board (CBVRSB). The workers, who are members of CUPE Local 5050, include 23 teaching assistants, two secretaries, two supervisor cleaners and one cleaner. A bus driver and an inventory clerk position were also lost through attrition.

CUPE and Local 5050 members are devastated by the board's decision to lay off staff.

"It is poor timing considering that the board members recently voted to increase their own wages. It's a bitter pill to swallow when our members are losing jobs," says Mary Jessome, CUPE Local 5050 president.

"The wage increases add up to approximately \$40,000. For that amount, they could have kept a number of staff," says Jessome.

"In February, the McNeil Government imposed a contract on teachers through Bill 75, which includes the creation of a committee to study inclusion in our classrooms. The bill also includes a clause that states no school board can make a change to their inclusion policies until that report from the committee comes back to the parties," says CUPE school board coordinator Grant Dart.

"A large part of inclusion in the classroom is the work our CUPE teacher assistants do on a daily basis. For CBVRSB, or any school board, to lay off teacher assistants before the committee reports back seems wrong – and contradictory to the committee's mandate.

"Why did the government set up a committee and spend taxpayers' money to address inclusion issues, if school boards are cutting and reducing those services prior to hearing the recommendations?" asks Dart.

Cape Breton is already struggling to survive as schools close and job losses continue says Kathy MacLeod, CUPE national representative. "Sadly, more and more people continue to leave the region."

"It's not just our members and their families that are affected by these job losses. This will seriously impact the quality of education students receive," says Jessome. "It will also cause a loss to the community in the rural Cape Breton areas that must be preserved."

"We encourage parents, students and all concerned members of the community to contact local school board members and their MLA to voice their concerns."

CUPE Local 5050 represents approximately 1,100 school board workers employed by the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board.

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