

Support Workers Strike in Ontario

At the risk of offending all the teachers and educational support workers I know, I am wondering why they think they are so special. Although the current strike on the front page of the news here in Ontario is organized by support workers and not the teachers they assist, teachers are directly affected. Ontario schools were forced to close their doors for two days when [CUPE \(Canadian Union of Public Employees\)](#) workers walked off the job last Friday in response to the province's decision to remove their right to challenge their contract or to strike.

What About Other Unions?

Everyone wants more money, especially with the cost of living rising and the economy tanking. The problem is just that, teachers and support staff are not unique. Other unions, such as those that healthcare, carpentry, and construction workers belong to, have been limited to minor increases in their recent requests for more money. Each of these unions represents essential workers. If you weren't aware of their importance to society prior to the pandemic, hopefully you learned something since then. None of them could work from home. In fact, many worked extra hours and shifts to compensate for the extra stress in their respective workplaces.

CUPE was asking for 11.7%!! Tell that to the other unions. The government (last) offered 6%, unheard of these days.

It's All About the Kids, Isn't it?

Throughout the pandemic, most teachers and parents agreed that

their children's mental health was of utmost importance. Why, now that things have (somewhat) returned to normal and kids are back to in-person school, do these professionals think the time is right to strike? Do they think the students (especially the younger ones) know why their mental health is not being considered?

Teachers' propensity to strike every few years can not help but affect their support workers. Perhaps both groups (teachers and support workers) should be included in the list of "essential services" and not permitted (or fined if they do) to strike.

Do Canadian Teachers Make More Money than Other Countries?

In Canada, education is governed by provincial politicians. That is why there is a variation between provinces in curriculum and salaries. For example, within provinces considered to be more affluent, salaries will be greater.

Canadian teachers in general are listed as number 4 in the world for their salaries. Compared to their American counterparts though, Canadian teachers and support workers pay more taxes, and most experience a more expensive cost of living.

Are Support Workers Underpaid?

Just because teachers in Ontario are paid well doesn't mean their support workers are. Although often behind the scenes, they provide important services. In fact, without them schools often (as is the case here) find it necessary to shut down.

The Latest on Support Workers' Strike

The latest news has Doug Ford, Ontario's premier, [promising to rescind the legislation](#), known as Bill 28, and the "notwithstanding clause" if the workers return to the job. What does that mean? Back to the negotiating table to find a compromise.

For the kids' sake, let's hope they do!