

Why is the Waterloo Catholic District School Board closed while Waterloo Region District School Board remain open?

In Ontario, there are 73 school Boards, and 65 of them have different employee groups represented by CUPE.

The WRDSB can stay open because none of their employees are on strike since CUPE represents none of them. The WCDSB has over 1200 employees represented by CUPE, so it is a very different situation.

In our Board, the office administrators, the educational assistants, information technology group, kindergarten class registered early childhood educators, extended day program supervisors, lunch hour supervisors, library technicians, and other Board staff are all CUPE members.

For safety reasons, we have decided to close schools. This decision is in keeping with many other Catholic Boards across the province who have a large portion of their employee groups represented by CUPE.



Why are the elementary schools closed if the teachers are not on strike? The decision to close schools was made based on our inability to provide a safe learning environment if we had remained open.

Our kindergarten classes have one teacher and one ECE in the class. The ECE would not be present, and neither would EAs be in these classes. This situation would pose a safety risk for students and staff.

In grades 1-8, we have students with special needs. Some of these students require EA support to ensure their safety and well-being and the safety of others. EA's are CUPE members and would not be in the classroom during a strike.

Our office administrators monitor the front door to ensure the safe arrival of students and to track visitor entry. They respond to parent inquiries; review messages regarding attendance; inform parents promptly of illness or injuries and attend to the medical needs of students during the day. None of these functions would happen as office administrators are CUPE members.

Although our Principals can help to troubleshoot, they can't cover every possible area.

Employees in union groups will not do the job of another union's striking member.

Many of our CUPE members are assigned supervision duties throughout the day to ensure a safe environment. The absence of these staff will result in supervision problems and create an unsafe learning and working environment.

STSWR drivers cover multiple routes involving both Boards. Picket lines will cause delays and impact service delivery.

CUPE members manage our Extended Day Programming (before school and after school programs), so these programs are not able to be operated during a strike.

CUPE members may legally delay entry onto the property. Students and parents would be required to cross picket lines.

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I understand that it might not be safe for elementary students to be at school but why is this impacting my child in high school?

The decision to close schools was made based on the inability to provide a safe learning environment for all if we had remained open.

We have students with special education needs in all grades. Some of these students require EA support to ensure their safety and the safety of others. EA's are CUPE members. It is an issue of equity. Students with special education needs have the same rights as their peers.

Our office administrators monitor the front door to ensure the safe arrival of students and to track visitor entry. They respond to parent inquiries; review messages regarding attendance; inform parents promptly of illness or injuries and attend to the medical needs of students during the day. None of these functions would happen as office administrators are CUPE members.

Our high schools are busy locations with between 1000 and 2500 students coming and going all day long. The office staff is integral to ensuring parents are aware when students are missing and responding to multiple needs throughout the day.

Although our Principals can help to troubleshoot, they can't cover every possible area.

Employees in union groups will not do the job of a striking member from another union.

Many of our CUPE members are assigned supervision duties throughout the day to ensure a safe environment. The absence of these staff will result in supervision problems and create an unsafe learning and working environment.

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Why is transportation cancelled during a CUPE strike?

CUPE members may legally delay entry onto the property. Students and parents would be required to cross picket lines. Buses would be delayed getting to their other commitments.



Why can't you just keep students with special education needs at home and allow everyone else to attend school?

We have students with special education needs in all grades and all schools. Some of these students require EA support to ensure their safety and the safety of others. EA's are CUPE members. It is an issue of equity. Students with special education needs have the same rights as their peers.

We are a Catholic School Board that welcomes everyone into our schools. We use an inclusionary education model that focuses on the dignity of all. Banning students with special education needs, while everyone else continues with their academic program, is not an acceptable solution to the challenges of a legal labour disruption.



What will happen to my child if the strike is prolonged?

We are hopeful that a resolution will be found promptly. At this early time of the school year, we are confident our staff can address the curriculum expectations for each grade level and course once the students return to class. We will reassess once we have a better understanding of how long the strike lasts.



Can the teachers be sending work home during the strike?

Yes, our plan is to move to remote learning so that there is a level of continuity of learning for students. This may not look like a traditional day and could involve a combination of asynchronous and synchronous learning.



As a parent I'll volunteer to cover the jobs as needed so you can keep the schools open?

While we appreciate that offer of support that would not help the province to get an early resolution to the strike as the union would see it as interference with the legal right to strike. There would also be liability and privacy issues if a volunteer were doing the work of a CUPE member.



My child is taking an eLearning course - can they continue during the strike

Yes, since the teachers are not on strike, so they are expected to continue where possible with the same instruction methods they were using before the CUPE Strike

My child is taking Co-op - can this continue during the strike?

Yes, the teachers are not on strike, so they are expected to continue where possible with the same instruction methods they were using before the CUPE Strike

I'm taking days off work unpaid during the strike, will I be compensated for this or for daycare that I may have to pay?

We recognize the strike will impact many people, including the staff involved in the strike; parents such as yourself who must make personal arrangements. Currently, we don't have an answer to that question. Once the strike is over, we will take direction from the government on any support that might be made available to parents, such as yourself.

I'm trying to understand what this strike is about, why doesn't the Board just settle this so that we can get our children back into school?

In Ontario, each education contract is negotiated in two parts. The first part has to do with all things monetary, such as pay, benefits, sick leave, and job security. The province is involved at this level of bargaining, not the Boards. The strike is over these issues that are being negotiated at the provincial level, not at the Board level. Once the provincial contract is settled, we will then bargain remaining non-monetary items at the local level, such as rules for transferring between schools, supervision duties, etc. So, at this stage, the Board is not sitting at the negotiation table; it is the provincial groups with the provincial CUPE representatives.