

To the Lethbridge School Division Community,

We are writing to update you on the status of the collective bargaining process with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) local 290 and 2843 and Lethbridge School Division. CUPE 290 and 2843 are comprised of over 500 contracted and casual employees, including the following positions: Educational Assistants, Advanced Educational Support, Learning Commons Facilitators, Student Support Workers, Administrative Assistants, Administrative Support, Business Support, Head Caretakers, Caretakers, Labourers, Labourer supervisors and trades staff including journey person carpenters, plumbers and electricians.

On March 17, 2025, Lethbridge School Division was officially informed by the provincial mediator assisting us with bargaining that he was “booking out” of the mediation process at the request of CUPE 290 and CUPE 2843. This means the mediator will not provide a recommendation for a settlement and a mandatory 14-day “cooling off period” starts. At the end of this 14-day cooling off period CUPE has the right to hold a strike vote. If a strike vote is successful, CUPE members will be in a position to take job action, which includes the possibility of going on full strike, with 72 hours’ notice.

We are grateful for the dedication, commitment and skill of our CUPE 290 and 2843 colleagues. We recognize the vital role they play across the division. Lethbridge School Division remains committed to working with CUPE 290 and 2843 to continue the collective bargaining process and reach an agreement that works for all parties.

It is important to let you know that if a strike does occur, it will have a significant impact on our operations. We will continue to work towards a negotiated settlement and are eager to continue bargaining. However, we are also working to prepare contingency plans in the case of job action which could include a full strike. In the event of a strike, Lethbridge School Division will remain open, and school operations will continue. Although there will be disruption to operations, we will make every effort to maintain programming with the staff and resources we have available. Creating safe, caring and enriching learning environments will remain our top priority.

We realize there will be many questions about the bargaining process and what job action might mean for our students, staff, parents/guardians, caregivers and school communities. We will be communicating in multiple ways as this situation develops. From time to time, I will provide updates that will be posted on our website and emailed via school messenger. We will also provide a labour relations website which will include additional information about the state of negotiations, information about bargaining and responses to Frequently Asked Questions. As well, schools will continue to communicate directly with parents/guardians as they normally do to provide updates on day-to-day operations when necessary.

We know this is a difficult situation that creates concern and uncertainty. We will do our best to keep you up to date and minimize disruptions where possible. We appreciate your support and patience as we work through a challenging and complex time.

Take care,

Mike Nightingale,
Superintendent
Lethbridge School Division