

Educational assistants working for Peel District School Board to go on strike

Early childhood educators and child and youth care practitioners will also be striking

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Some education workers employed by the Peel District School Board (PDSB) are going on strike.

In a December 1 media release, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) announced OPSEU Local 2100 Educational Assistants (EAs), Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and Child and Youth Care Practitioners (CYCPs) employed by the PDSB voted to go on strike in response to "their employer dragging their heels in bargaining."

According to the release, 80 per cent of the Local 2100's approximately 4,000 members participated in the strike vote, with 98 per cent who voted being in favour of strike action.

Melody Hurtubise, the Local 2100 president and bargaining chair, said in the release she's not surprised by the results of the vote.

"Peel EAs, ECEs, and CYCPs are sick of the disrespect our employer is showing not only at the bargaining table but in our workplaces every day," said Hurtubise. "We are dangerously understaffed, under-resourced, and the employer refuses to address the violence in our schools, or even update our job descriptions."

In its release, the OPSEU said the PDSB has not moved during seven months of negotiations with the Local 2100 bargaining team.

The union said its EAs, ECEs, and CYCPs want to see the following: safe staff-to-student ratios, better workloads, more workplace resources, health and safety measures, reasonable supervision times, work from home options where possible, and updates to job descriptions.

In the statement, OPSEU President JP Hornick said the union's PDSB members are organized and determined to take on their employer.

"What this strike vote shows us is that these workers, most of whom are women and many of whom are racialized, are willing to fight to get the respect and the working conditions they deserve," said Hornick.

In a written statement sent to the Citizen, the PDSB said it respects and values the work carried out each day by OPSEU Local 2100 education workers to maintain safe and caring learning environments for students.

"We respect the collective bargaining process in which the union is currently engaged in with our school board, and we remain hopeful we'll be able to reach a fair negotiated agreement which avoids any impact on Peel students and families," reads the statement.