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Hello,

My name is Sherri Morgan, and I am an organizer with the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

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Before we begin, I wish to acknowledge that we are on Treaty 1 Territory, the traditional territory and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis."

I want to thank River East Transcona Educational Assistants Association for this important opportunity to discuss the value of CUPE for school support staff in the River East Transcona School Division.

The choice you have before you is a unique opportunity to choose a union that will represent you into the future.

You have the choice to stay with the same, or to start in the strongest position possible with CUPE.

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CUPE BY THE NUMBERS

CUPE is Canada's largest public sector union. We represent over 780,000 workers across Canada, including over 140,000 workers in elementary and secondary schools across the country.

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In Manitoba, CUPE represents forty-five K-12 school division locals, and approximately 6,100 school workers in the province, including education assistants, clerical staff and secretaries, custodians and cleaners, school bus drivers, and other support staff.

I'll repeat those numbers again because they are important for you to know that you would be part of a union that has the power, experience, and ability to represent you as River East Transcona School Division employees.

CUPE represents 140,000 K-12 school workers across Canada, and over 6,100 right here in Manitoba. CUPE negotiates over 400 school division collective agreements.

To put it another way: more than half of all K-12 education workers across Canada are members of CUPE.

There is a reason for that.

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THE BEST CONTRACTS

When you are choosing a union, you need to be certain that the union will fight for you in the workplace.

Many unions offer a lot of perks you might get, but at the end of the day, you need to be confident that your union will negotiate strong contracts and protect you in the workplace.

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That is what CUPE is known for. That is why so many K-12 workers choose CUPE.

School staff trust CUPE to negotiate the best contracts and represent them in the workplace.

We want all River East Transcona School Division employees to really think about why so many school staff have chosen CUPE, including right across Manitoba... including right here in the River East Transcona School Division.

Many River East Transcona Educational Assistant Association members who we have spoken to have said that they see other River East Transcona School Division CUPE members getting good contracts and representation in the workplace.

Many River East Transcona Educational Assistant Association members already see how CUPE delivers for its members. We don't make empty promises because you already see that we get the job done.

You already know that CUPE fights and wins for our members at the negotiating table. We want to fight for you as well.

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THE BEST STAFF

The reason so many workers choose CUPE, including in the River East School Division, is we have the best negotiators, the best workplace representatives, and the best specialist staff to help support you, right here in the River East Transcona School Division, every day.

We have a strong team of specialist staff; CUPE has 2 in-house lawyers, a dedicated CUPE Researcher, a Health and Safety Representative, 2 Communications Representatives, a Human Rights Representative and an in-house Education Representative whose role is to train CUPE members and provide them with the tools they need to succeed in the workplace and the union.

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In addition to these specialists, we have dedicated negotiators called National Representatives who support our K-12 school members in meetings with management and negotiating collective agreements.

Your National Representatives assist with day-to-day labour relations like grievances.

They support members in arbitrations and negotiations.

They are also dedicated to helping each CUPE local operate effectively. They are trained in helping deal with conflict resolution, bullying, and harassment, and ensuring financial accountability.

On top of this, we have access to staff who specialize in legal, communications, research, health and safety, pensions and benefits, job evaluation, education, political action, and human rights from across the country.

No matter what happens, you will be served by CUPE's experts.

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WE KNOW THE River East Transcona School Division.

CUPE already represents River East Transcona School Division staff, including clerical, library techs, custodians, maintenance, and bus drivers.

We know how to assert our strength on the River East Transcona School Division management, and when we do we win.

Our staff, negotiators, and union representatives are unafraid to push back against senior admin at the River East Transcona School Division, and we are known for defending our members in meetings with management.

River East Transcona School Division staff know that when they have CUPE in their corner, they are well protected.

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CUPE STRUCTURE

Many of you wonder about CUPE's structure and dues.

One of the reasons so many workers across Canada choose CUPE is because we are a union that isn't top-down or that centralizes out of reach of members.

We are a union that is with you, and for you right in the workplace.

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Every group of workers is organized into what's called a CUPE Local.

Within CUPE, the general membership are the biggest decision-makers in the union. That's you.

You would elect an executive board, which is governed by a set of Bylaws to ensure accountability and transparency.

You would also elect a bargaining committee, who CUPE would train, for your next round of contract negotiations.

The structure is similar to what you may have with River East Transcona Educational Assistants Association, only your local would be subject to the checks and balances of our CUPE Bylaws and CUPE National Constitution.

You would be able to elect a new executive board at your Annual General Membership Meetings.

CUPE provides excellent training for new executive board members, financial training for treasurers, and additional training for shop stewards in your own schools.

With CUPE we make sure your on-site representatives and executive are well trained and ready to serve the membership.

In CUPE, we believe that you, River East Transcona School Division staff, should have a lot of control over how your union works.

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Some other unions have what's called the "central pot," where everything is controlled centrally on Broadway.

With CUPE, we know that you know your workplace best.

That's why we empower your own CUPE locals to operate autonomously while ensuring that there are still checks and balances.

That way you can be assured that your CUPE Local is focused on you and your needs, rather than those of other bigger sectors.

Other unions can't guarantee that.

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UNION DUES

Speaking of cheques and balances, many of you likely wonder what CUPE's union dues would look like.

It's really quite simple.

Union Dues are based on hours worked.

CUPE's base union dues are 0.85%.

That pays for all the expert negotiators, specialists, workplace representatives, training, and more.

This amount also helps fund our National Strike Fund which I will talk about soon.

From there, your own general membership meeting can determine anything on top of that to stay within the CUPE Local.

Most CUPE locals in Manitoba set their total dues at 1.25%, which is pretty standard. Others might vote for a little more, or a little less.

It is completely up to you.

With CUPE, you get to decide what to do with your union's dues. Whether it is to provide additional training, set up retirement events for your co-workers, hosting annual events, and more.

The main thing for you to understand is that CUPE union dues are 0.85%, and anything above that is voted on directly by you, the River East Transcona School Division membership.

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NATIONAL STRIKE FUND

I'll touch on our National Strike Fund, which is the pool of money that is made available if you ever go on strike. I'll note that strike action is always the last resort, and is always voted on by you, the members, just like your contract.

At CUPE we believe that no worker should ever go on strike without pay.

Our Strike Fund at CUPE is over 130 million dollars strong and would start on day one of a strike. This means you would never be left behind.

The good thing about our National Strike Fund is that if any local uses the fund, it is quickly replenished.

For example, almost every CUPE member in New Brunswick went on strike, pushing the government to cave to their demands.

Our National Strike Fund is already fully replenished and ready for any other CUPE locals who need to strike. No other union can offer such a large strike fund that can be replenished so quickly after a strike.

That's the power of Canada's biggest union. We have each other's backs.

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CONCLUSION

To wrap things up, I want to remind everyone that the choice in front of you is very clear.

You can choose status quo.

You can choose a union that doesn't have wide experience in the school sector.

Or you can choose CUPE, the largest, strongest K-12 school staff union in Manitoba and in Canada.

With CUPE you would be in the strongest position possible for your next contract.

In fact, CUPE is a leader in school sector contracts for EAs, clerical, and other support staff.

When the Provincial Government told Manitoba school divisions that they had to negotiate 0%, 0%, 0.75%, and 1%, CUPE fought back and won in dozens of school divisions.

While some unions like the MGEU accepted 0% wage increases for their school division members, CUPE did not in divisions right across the province.

The work we did ensured that other support staff associations would not take zero's as well.

If you choose CUPE, you can be assured that our record at the bargaining table will be there for you. You deserve the best.

Recently thousands of health care support workers in Manitoba voted for CUPE when given the choice of what union should represent them.

Those workers knew that CUPE would be the strongest union to represent them into the future.

CUPE is here and ready to fight for all River East Transcona School Division employees.

When there are too many unions representing workers in the same workplace, management knows they can try to create divisions.

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When we are united, we can only be stronger. That's why you should merge with CUPE. We are ready to represent you.

Thank you.