

Monday, October 2, 2006

**Mr. Chairman, Trustees and members of the Board**

**My name is Tina DiVona, I am once again grateful to be given the opportunity to appear before this board on behalf of the members of CUPE Local 2026.**

**I can't express how proud I was of this Board last week when you remained steadfast in maintaining your decision. The Minister of Education demanded that you make millions of dollars in cuts, which would have meant many support staff layoffs. You stood up for local education, and for that, the community owes you its gratitude.**

**I am sure many of you were as outraged as I was when I read the Minister's letter last Friday and saw the sentence that said:**

**"I understand how difficult budget deliberations can be, as Trustees balance a desire to increase services with available revenue."**

**"Increase services" the new Minister said. Does she really not appreciate that this board is merely trying to maintain existing services? Not once last week did the Minister of Education refer to support staff, which will bear the brunt of "Plan B". Not once did she acknowledge the impact on the**

**workers, mostly women, who will be laid off.**

**Most of us were hoping for understanding and a different tone from the new Minister, but the message is still the same: “balance your budgets as the formula dictates or else we’ll do it for you.”**

**Does Ms. Wynne realize the far reaching consequences of the Government’s actions?**

**As members of this Board appreciate, the education funding formula is seriously flawed. CUPE members have realized this for years. The formula consistently underestimates the cost of maintaining support staff and leaves Boards scrambling to find funds to cover vital jobs.**

**It is important for everyone to realize that it is not just this Board that is affected by the broken funding formula. Boards all across the province are struggling to balance budgets, and many face the same layoffs to support staff that this Board was courageous enough not to make.**

**CUPE’s research shows that school board budget shortfalls for 2006-07 will easily top \$300 million province wide. Support staff layoffs in the GTA alone will be more than a thousand, with hundreds more elsewhere in the province.**

**Like members of this Board, many CUPE members have run out of patience with this government’s promises to fix the funding formula. With me again tonight is Frank Ventresca, who is the chair of CUPE’s Provincial School**

**Board Committee, and he is leading a province-wide campaign to raise awareness of how support staff cuts affect the quality of education students receive.**

**Collectively, those who care about what is happening to public education in this province have to turn up the heat on the provincial government. They are now trying to hide millions, maybe billions in budgetary surpluses while forcing school boards to count toilet paper rolls. The public has to hold the province accountable for providing a decent education for our children.**

**Again, we thank members of this Board for standing in defense of our students, staff, parents and communities. We support you now, we'll support you in November, and we will work on all fronts to hold Dalton McGuinty to his PROMISE to fix the funding formula.**

**As a group we wish to share with you what the black ribbon signifies:**

*We mourn in our ever-quiet way for the loss of jobs experienced by support workers in our school board.*

*We mourn for the ones that are left carrying the loads of many.*

*We mourn for a government lost in deceit and broken promises.*

*We mourn for all school boards who cannot seem to break the purse strings that are tied so tight.*

*We mourn for the children whose education should not be a struggle about money.*

**Once again, your decision tonight will forecast the future of education across the providence. From there, we as workers and taxpayers will forecast the future of this Liberal government.**

**Thank you and God Bless.**

**Tina DiVona  
President**