

# Higgs' Friday Oct 29th press conference: fact vs. fiction

## WHAT PREMIER HIGGS CLAIMS

Responding to CUPE's demands will put the future of all New Brunswickers at risk

CUPE's primary concern is to cause disruption

CUPE has not shown an interest in engaging in meaningful negotiations

We're willing to provide educational assistants (EAs) with a pension plan

We can't keep doing the same thing and expect to be paid more for it.

Public sector worker wages "appear over the top" and these are "well paid positions".

## THE REALITY

New Brunswick isn't in a deficit. There was a \$408 million surplus last year, and another sizeable surplus is expected this year. Part of the surplus is a transfer from the federal government meant for front-line workers in the pandemic, like CUPE members. CUPE's wage demands are reasonable and raising up the wages of public sector workers will benefit our economy.

CUPE's primary concern is real wage increases for front-line public service workers. CUPE has mitigated disruption by:

- Making essential services agreements to maintain services in the event of job action
- Giving 100 days strike notice to Government
- Holding off on strike action for 2 weeks to accommodate the rise in COVID-19 cases in September

CUPE locals have been negotiating with Government for more than 4 years for a deal. We also participated in conciliation processes and mediation. CUPE has clearly shown our willingness to negotiate by dropping our starting position by 8%. Premier Higgs, on the other hand, was the one to walk away from mediation. The Premier has also recently lowered his wage offer to CUPE members.

Government has suggested giving a lesser pension plan to EAs than what other education workers currently have. Government has rejected CUPE's proposal to bring EAs into the current education sector plan.

CUPE members deliver extremely valuable services to the public. We have been the frontline heroes during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is entirely reasonable to be paid a decent wage that keeps pace with the increasing cost of living.

CUPE members are the lowest paid public service workers in Canada. After a decade of wage constraints, we haven't had a real wage increase in over 12 years; we've actually had a real wage loss.

# BARGAINING FORWARD

