



January 11, 2019

## Provincial Executive Liaison Report

To: District 10, Council  
From: Karen Littlewood, Executive Officer

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### 1. **The 13<sup>th</sup> Tri-National Conference for the Defense of Public Education**

The 13<sup>th</sup> Tri-National Conference for the Defense of Public Education took place in Orizaba, Veracruz in Mexico from November 9 to 11, 2018. Representing OSSTF/FEESO were Vice-Presidents Cindy Dubué and Rob Gascho, and staff from the Communications / Political Action Department, including Domenic Bellissimo, Tracey Marshall and Gary Fenn. District 12 OTBU member Paul Bocking attended the Conference to make a presentation on research he has recently completed.

Approximately 150 delegates attended the Conference, which was the largest number of participants of any Tri-National. Delegations from Canada (including BCTF and CUPE National), the United States (Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Arizona, New Orleans, AFT, and NEA), Mexico (Veracruz, Oaxaca, Autonomous University of Mexico and a number of CNTE branch locals), Ecuador, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico and England participated in the three-day gathering. The event comes on the heels of a federal election in Mexico that saw the incumbent government defeated by a seemingly more progressive political party. Expressions of very cautious optimism for progressive change by our hosts were heard over the weekend.

Prior to the official start of the Conference, delegates had the choice to visit local schools. Gary Fenn visited an Indigenous preschool located in a small town in the mountains just east of Orizaba. There was a commemoration ceremony celebrating the construction of a dome covering over the school's courtyard, and the entire community attended the event. The school receives support from BCTF's International Fund. The preschool had four classrooms where students learn in both Spanish and the local Indigenous language. The principal of the school spoke of the challenges they face in getting funding from the government. The previous government demonstrated little support for Indigenous education as it continued to impose a colonial model on local communities.

The remainder of the delegation visited a secondary school specializing in technology and finding a variety of ways to deliver curriculum to underserved areas of Veracruz. They spent extensive time speaking to educators and students about their educational and personal aspirations and as always, it was a highlight of the trip.

Cindy Dubué provided a summary of the struggles and victories that OSSTF/FEESO and other Ontario education unions have faced since the last Tri-National in 2016 in Vancouver. Cindy highlighted the importance of the Charter Challenge victory, the remedy provided to members, ratification of a contract extension, the recent provincial election, and the challenges that we are likely to face under the Ford Government.

The OSSTF/FEESO delegation attended workshops at the Conference on a variety of subject areas including:

- Commodification of education, new methods of privatization and the impact of information technology on education
- Education financing, budget cuts and public resource subsidization by the private sector
- Precarious working conditions for educators and deterioration of studying conditions for students in higher education
- Standardized tests and assessment of teachers' performance
- Alternative models of Indigenous education
- Experiences of organizations at all levels of engagement in fighting for public education

Paul Bocking (District 12 OTBU) gave a presentation on his research in the standardized testing workshop, while Gary Fenn gave an update on Indigenous Education initiatives in Ontario. The focus of Gary's presentation was on continued focus on implementing the Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the recent actions to halt that process by the Ford Government.

Throughout the Conference, delegates received updates from a number of jurisdictions regarding the struggles and victories that educators have experienced in public education in recent years. Among the most compelling stories were:

- England – their experience with the creation of a Charter School model in their country and the struggle to maintain a functioning public education system
- Arizona – their success at mobilizing educators against the Republican Government at a time when educators were disengaged from their union and their union was disengaged from them
- Chicago – the battle to unionize charter schools continues and to date, the CTU has organized 23 schools.

After the workshops and reports from jurisdictions, conference participants agreed to a number of resolutions to pursue over the next two years in our respective countries and provinces / states. Delegates committed to strengthening our cross border solidarity and wherever possible, to coordinate common language and common demands—for the common good.

A press conference was held at the close of the conference and the Veracruz delegates were pleased to be able to have international guests with them demanding a strengthening of the public education system in each of our countries. A declaration and series of actions for the next two years will be circulated shortly.

As the conference concluded, Rob Gascho gave closing remarks on behalf of the entire Canadian contingent. OSSTF/FEESO also received a mural created by students at a school in Mexico that received Federation support after the devastating earthquake in Oaxaca in September 2017. The earthquake destroyed the school, and OSSTF/FEESO provided funds to the Tri-National "Adopt a School" program to begin the process of rebuilding. The director of the preschool, Beatriz Gutiérrez Luis was on hand to present the mural. The CPA Department is in the process of framing the mural for display.

The next Tri-National Conference will occur in two years somewhere in the United States.

## 2. **Teacher Education Staff Work Group Meeting**

A meeting of the Teacher Education Staff Work Group was held on November 13, 2018. This meeting included representatives from OTF and from each of the four teacher affiliates. Assigned Staff from the Educational Services Department attended the meeting on behalf of OSSTF/FEESO. Staff Researchers and Policy Analysts from OTF and the affiliates were invited to join for a portion of the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting on November 13 was twofold:

- 1) to finalize the agenda and speakers for the OTF/Affiliate Teacher Education Symposium scheduled for February 8-9, 2019; and
- 2) to meet with affiliate researchers to discuss a potential research project to examine the impact of the expansion of the Bachelor of Education program on new teachers' knowledge, pedagogy and sense of preparedness.

### **Items of Interest**

Planning for the OTF/Affiliate Symposium entitled *Teacher Education, Where are we now, and where are we going?* is well underway. [Linda Darling Hammond](#), will be joining the symposium opening night for a conversation about international trends in teacher preparation. [Kathy Broad](#) of OISE will attend Saturday to share her knowledge of teacher education trends in Canada at the pre-service level. New this year, Ontario faculties of education will be invited to send up to three representatives to the Symposium at their expense: faculty, staff, and/or teacher candidates.

There was consensus around the table that a research project looking at the impact of the expanded Initial Teacher Education programs in Ontario is worth pursuing. There are, however, methodological challenges in comparing hindsight recollections to current perceptions of participants. The current thinking is to conduct a survey followed up with structured qualitative interviews in order to focus on specific issues. Further meetings will be required to flesh out the details of both the research question, methodology, and survey instrument. This research will inform the book chapter OTF and the Affiliates have agreed (in principle) to contribute to, *Initial Teacher Education in Ontario: The Four-Semester Teacher Education Programs after Five Years*. Other contributors invited to participate include the 13 Ontario public faculties of education, 2 private universities, OCT, and EDU. There will be chapters dedicated to French language programs, Indigenous teacher education, and new technological education programs at the secondary level.

## 3. **Teen Mental Health Recommendations**

Dr. Stan Kutcher has spoken at two OSSTF/FEESO events over the last year. He has created a website, [Teenmentalhealth.org](http://Teenmentalhealth.org) containing a variety of resources including:

- Teach Mental Health – an on-line program available to educators
- Mental Health & High School Curriculum Guide
- CESMH – Critically Evaluating School Mental Health – Provides evaluation services to school systems on mental health programs they are considering
- Resources for Teens and families including TMH Mags – a set of resources for students about a variety of mental health issues

- The **Mental Health** Literacy: Programs and Training

The website is easily navigated and resources are well researched and well created. While similar resources are also available through School Mental Health ASSIST, an Ontario organization working directly with public school boards, a number of differences are apparent. Teenmentalhealth.org is more accessible for families and students and contains many more links and resources specific to these users. The Educator resources are more in-depth and tend to provide more clinical/medical information about mental health and mental disorders. The School Mental Health ASSIST resources are directly linked to the Ontario Ministry of Education documents on mental health, and are supported through the Mental Health Leads in school boards.

Educational Services staff continue to believe that these resources can work well together and that members should have access to as much quality information as possible.

Currently, OSSTF/FEESO is partnering with SMH ASSIST to develop resources for members including a Social/Emotional Learning Curriculum resource designed to be used in the Grade 10 Careers course. An article on SMH ASSIST was published in the Fall 2018 issue of Forum and an article on teenmentalhealth.org is being planned for the Winter 2019 issue.

Educational Services staff will continue to consult with Dr. Kutcher regarding possible updates to the content of OSSTF/FEESO's *Mental Health: Let's Act* workshop and inclusion of links to teenmentalhealth.org in the resources provided to members during the workshop.

#### 4. **Ontario College of Teachers Professional Advisory “Supporting Students’ Mental Health”**

On November 8, 2018, The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) released their seventh Professional Advisory - “Supporting Students’ Mental Health”, and it is available online at <https://www.oct.ca/resources/advisories/mental-health>.

The Professional Advisory aims to highlight the responsibilities of Ontario Certified Teachers (OCTs) with respect to the mental health and well-being of students. OSSTF provided input in to the College’s draft advisory, along with other OTF affiliates, in a joint submission. This submission suggested a number of changes and identified a number of concerns, including contradictory advice to members, and implications that members should be participating in the mental health diagnosing process.

This final version of the advisory reminds educators that they cannot diagnose or propose treatment to students in the scope of their practice and professional responsibilities. The advisory does become confusing in nature when it provides suggestions on how to identify mental illness, describes disorders, and attempts to help teachers identify students at risk and highlights the importance of early recognition and intervention. It seems to imply that a member must have a deeper understanding of mental health and is responsible for recognizing when a student has declining mental health issues. These signs are not always visible to the teacher, and require deeper questioning by members to discover root causes. This goes beyond the scope of most teachers.

The OCT uses its *Professional Standards* as the backbone for building this advisory and mentions briefly the legal responsibilities and applicable documents with which members should be familiar.

We should be concerned about the “*what you can do*” section, which lists a number of actions, that if taken by members, could be perceived as boundary issues. The draft contained a longer more descriptive list, and we are pleased to see that it was minimized and some feedback for the final version was taken in to account by the OCT. Similarly the “*Learn to recognize behaviours of concern*” section provides characteristics to watch for in students, and to “*take action*” on determining factors such as family history of illness/disorder, intergenerational trauma and family doctor consultations. Inquiring into these topics with students could also be perceived as a boundary issue, and members should be aware that asking personal questions of students and their family/health history is beyond the scope of their role. Members should be on alert if these topics arise organically with students, or students provide information through disclosure, and watch for signs as appropriate. While the recommendation for teachers to be sensitive towards students is important, the advisory’s promotion of suggesting “yoga, prayer and culture ceremonies” may lead to a complaint against a member.

The advisory makes the effort in supporting mental health, but seems to lack resources and training needed by members to effectively put this into practice. Teachers should familiarize themselves with protocols that exist with their employer related to mental health, suicide prevention, confidentiality protocol and site based support/resource teams for students.

Teachers should practice and respect safe and professional boundaries with students at all times. Any concerning signs or drastic change in behaviour from students should be communicated directly to administration, and other authorities where necessary. Personal disclosure by teachers to students in an attempt to help students relate, or destigmatize, may also be considered a boundary violation. Members should avoid sharing details of their own mental health with students.

D/BU #58 – OCT Professional Advisory “Supporting Students’ Mental Health” was issued to presidents and members on November 20, 2018.

**5. Ontario College of Teachers (Standards of Practice and Accreditation Department, Projects Management Lead and Membership Services Department) Inter-staff Meeting with Ontario Teachers’ Federation (OTF) and Affiliates**

On November 21, 2018, an Inter-staff meeting was held at the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) with Jessica Burnie (for Peter Bates) present as staff from OSSTF/FEESO. Representatives from OTF, OECTA, ETFO and AEFO were also in attendance.

**Bill 48 – Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, 2018**

OTF and OSSTF/FEESO raised concerns over the OCT governance restructuring contained within Bill 48, and inquired about OCT’s opinion of the proposed changes. OCT maintains that they were surprised at the restructuring of OCT’s Council within the Bill and they are eager to also see what it would look like if implemented. The OCT’s Governance Review Report was to be publicly released at the next council meeting on December 6, 2018, but was released without notice on November 27. David Brown, who completed the review, will be present at the council meeting to speak to the report and

take questions. OTF raised further concern over the duties of OCT committees within Bill 48, and how that will look if it passes. OSSTF/FEESO inquired if OCT would be making a submission on the proposed legislation, and OCT responded that the Governance Review Report will be OCT's submission. OSSTF/FEESO addressed concern over the proposed legislative changes to move the OCT further away from a self-governing body, and inquired about OCT's opinion of this. The College is aware that the bill would do this, but they are feeling fortunate at this time that the changes were not as drastic as those proposed towards the College of Trades in terms of full cancellation. OSSTF/FEESO also inquired if the OCT had any insight as to why the OCT's governance was addressed in the bill, and governance changes were not proposed towards the College of Early Childhood Educators. The OCT indicated they had no knowledge of why the proposed changes were inconsistent between the two professional colleges.

The math testing for teacher candidates mentioned in the bill was discussed in detail, with OTF raising concerns over the impact on the Faculties of Education. OTF pushed that the affiliates and the OCT should have a mutual interest in providing input to the Ministry on what the program and testing will look like, so that the outcome is not decided without our assistance in shaping it to be valid and meaningful. The OCT indicated that they will likely explore options about the model to be implemented if it will impact the Faculties of Education, but that OTF as a voice would probably have a greater impact. OTF would ideally like to push the Ministry to strike a task force that would bring stakeholders of mathematics education together. A deeper look at the successes and failures of the Trent Faculty of Education intervention program in math would be worthwhile. OTF proposed that time is needed to bring together experts and collaborative players in order to make any math testing meaningful, and that examining "the problem that needs fixing" (i.e. the tests themselves and matching curriculum to standardized tests) should be carefully considered. The OCT committed to raising these ideas with the deans of the faculties at a meeting in the near future. OSSTF/FEESO requested clarification from the OCT on whether they had any interest in administering any tests for teachers, and OCT confirmed that they have no interest in it. OTF indicated concern that the test will potentially deter strong candidates from entering the teaching profession. OSSTF/FEESO reminded the group to consider the cost factor with implementing such a test for little gain in secondary education, where teachers less commonly teach outside of their subject area, even by mutual agreement. OTF lobbied the OCT to remind their council that a submission response to Bill 48 on the teacher candidate testing should include these and other unintended consequences.

#### Accreditation Updates

- OCT reported that more and more requests are being received to approve changes to faculty programs, as faculties continue to tweak their programs.
- Issues continue with the OCT Council as the ministry has yet to fill appointed positions, but the OCT is managing the workflow and meeting targets for now.
- A new tech program in Windsor has new changes approved to increase online components that allow teacher candidates to work more remotely. These changes will be finalized before December.
- A French language review will be happening with Laurentian Faculty of Education soon.
- New staff has been hired with the OCT as part of the Accreditation Department and another position for a Program Officer will be posted soon.

- The OCT continues to encourage Faculties of Education to increase French programs as well as teachables like math, French immersion and science.
- Compliments were made to OSSTF/FEESO for our data tracking in subject areas and teacher candidates.

### **AQ Updates**

OCT recently reviewed the guidelines chart, and appreciates all of the comments from OTF and affiliates on further developing guidelines. From January 1st, 2018 to October 31st, 2018, 178 AQs have been accredited this year by the Standards of Practice and Education Committee. The website is quite active with 183 “Find an AQ” inquiries.

### **Certification Updates**

OCT has been working to update the certificates of technology teachers to reflect their work experience. This will require a change in the regulation to move forward and publish the changes, but the work is being done now to meet the demand once a regulation change occurs. The government has indicated they are in favour of making a change to the regulation.

### **Record Checks**

On November 1, 2018, OCT reported that changes were implemented by the government with respect to criminal record checks. There are now three versions (previously only two). The new type includes criminal records and judicial matters, and contains information on court orders and convictions. No action has been taken by the council yet, but a change is likely to come to request teachers to submit a different version than currently required, when seeking certification. The basic criminal record check will not provide enough information, and the school boards already require one with more detail.

### **Evaluation Services**

The OCT will continue to make corrections to teaching certificates if errors have been made. Although the Ministry of Education has made some errors with qualifications in the past, the OCT has reviewed the concerns brought forward by OSSTF/FEESO about a specific member, and the ministry did not appear to make any errors in evaluating the member with respect to Spanish versus English qualifications. If further information is needed, or OSSTF/FEESO wants to pursue this further, the ministry would have to grant the change.

### **OTF Report**

OTF provided copies of the OTF Executive Summary, highlighting the five year long TLLP results and data related to the AQ subsidies in math, tech and kindergarten. ETFO provided information on their AQs, including the high demand for the LGBT AQ and the Indigenous Education AQ. They pride themselves on offering equity based AQs.

## **6. WSIB Denies over 90% of Chronic Mental Stress (CMS) Claims**

A recent blog post titled [Ontario: open for harassment](#) and posted on December 5, 2018 and a *Toronto Star* article titled [Workers' compensation board denies over 90 per cent of chronic mental stress claims, audit shows](#) and published on December 4, 2018 have highlighted, once again, the wrong-headed decisions of the Workers' Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). Back in 2016, labour advocates and legal experts challenged the legislation, which only allowed for compensation for mental health injuries caused by a traumatic incident, not ones triggered by ongoing trauma in their workplace. The

legislation was changed to allow for both Traumatic Mental Stress (TMS) claims and for Chronic Mental Stress (CMS) claims, a monumental victory, at the time for all workers.

Both the article in *The Toronto Star* and the blog post highlight what compensation advocates were lobbying against when the WSIB was contemplating their new [operational policy 15-03-14](#) on CMS back in 2017, that workers must prove the workplace was the “predominant cause” of their workplace illness. By adopting this higher standard of proof, the WSIB is outright discriminating against workers with mental stress injuries, as the test for physical injuries is to simply show that the workplace is a “significant contributing factor” of their workplace injury. While the Supreme Court of Canada and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal (WSIAT) have rejected the notion that mental injuries are less real, more subjective and more suspect than physical ones, the WSIB policy completely ignores these facts.

*The Toronto Star* article references an internal audit done by the WSIB which states that between January and May 2018, only 10 of the 159 claims for CMS were approved – a denial rate of almost 94%. While we expected there would be major hurdles with the new policy, the extremely high denial rate is actually quite shocking. Even more disturbing is when the CMS denial rate is compared to WSIB’s own denial rate for all injuries, 22% in 2017 (see [WSIB by the Numbers statistical report](#), Tables 1.1 and 2.1.).

What this means for our OSSTF/FEESO members is that while they now have the right to make a claim for benefits due to workplace harassment, the extremely high denial rate is essentially providing immunity for employers from bearing the costs of those injuries. At the same time, if a member chooses to file the claim, the WSIB’s own policy continues to exacerbate and cause our members more mental stress as the claims are denied and the battle to get benefits goes on for many years. As an organization, we will need to ensure we provide the tools to local leaders to assist at the early stages of the claim process, but also ensure we have the expertise at the Provincial Office to address the challenges ahead.

At the Provincial Office level, we have seen a marked increase in the number of mental stress (CMS, TMS and PTSD) claims that have come in to the office over the last couple of years, but especially in 2018. It is important to note that while the WSIB/WSIAT process is similar in nature to the grievance/arbitration process, it is common for a complex WSIB file, such as the ones dealing with mental injuries, to take five (5), and up to ten (10) years to come to resolution. We need to bear this in mind as we move forward, in order to protect the mental health of all OSSTF/FEESO members and those who do this work on their behalf.

## **7. Lobby Day 2018 – November 28, 2018**

OSSTF/FEESO’s Queen’s Park Lobby Day 2018 was attended by 146 members representing almost every District from across the province. Only Districts 32 and 34 were unable to send representatives. Of the attendees, almost 40% were first-time Lobby Day participants.

On the Lobby Day, 86 MPP appointments were scheduled consisting of 39 NDP, 6 Liberal Party, 1 Green Party and 40 PC. Despite the last-minute change in the legislative scheduled sitting, only four appointments were cancelled - all PC. As well, of the PC appointments, only two were with Ministers – Education Minister Lisa Thompson and Transportation Minister Jeff Yurek. It appears that most Ministers did not want to

appear that they were encroaching on the turf of the Education Minister as most gave the excuse that they had other pressing duties that day.

Of the cancelled appointments, local Districts and the MPPs were making arrangements to reschedule them in the local constituency office.

The breakfast reception was attended by almost 30 MPPs of all parties and featured guest speakers like Education Minister Lisa Thompson, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath, NDP Education Critic Marit Stiles and Green Party Leader Mike Schreiner.

While final numbers are not in yet, many MPPs, of all parties, either held up the hashtag sign "I support public education" or stood next to an OSSTF/FEESO member who held the sign.

The preliminary feedback from OSSTF/FEESO members was very positive on all aspects of the event from the training session, breakfast and lunch events and the appointments. Further review of the members' feedback is still being conducted including reports on the MPP meetings.

#### **8. Women's March 2019 – The #WomenWave**

"Two years ago, on the first full day of Donald Trump's presidency, women, men and gender non-conforming people, young and old, of diverse faiths, differently abled, immigrants and indigenous – came together, 5 million strong, on all seven continents of the world" <sup>1</sup> to march on Washington to protest the loss of women's rights and freedoms proposed by President Trump. The premise for this march and all of the other 'sister marches' occurring around the world was a belief in a world that is equitable, tolerant, just and safe for all.

On Saturday, January 19, 2019, to coincide with the Women's March on Washington 2019, OSSTF/FEESO members will march again in Toronto – as well as in many other communities across the province, including Hamilton and Ottawa. OSSTF/FEESO is encouraging all members to attend their local marches and celebrate the sisterhood in 'The #WomensWave' together. This year, events are planned to mark this anniversary, to show solidarity for women, to push for the advancement of women's rights and human rights in Ontario and globally and to stand against the Ford government's attacks on workers, public services, women and girls and our communities.

Two networks, which grew out of the incredible grassroots efforts of previous year's marches, are planning marches: Women's March Canada, and March on Canada. Search for your community march on Facebook or at Women's March Canada (<https://www.womensmarch.com/>).

The OFL will add locations as they are announced. Join a Women's March in your community: [www.ofl.ca/womens-march-events-across-ontario](http://www.ofl.ca/womens-march-events-across-ontario).

For information on Women's March Canada or other 'Sister Marches' occurring across Ontario, contact Tracey Marshall, via email at [tracey.marshall@osstf.ca](mailto:tracey.marshall@osstf.ca)

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.womensmarch.com/>

**9. Recent DBU's 2018-2019**

- 079 - Update on Working Group on Support Staff LTD Plans
- 078 - Women's March
- 077 - REVISED Awards for Members
- 076 - Appointment of EA - Interim
- 075 - Appointment of EA
- 074 - OFL Prevention Link Courses
- 073 - Applications for Educational Services Workshop Training
- 072 - Expiring Policies
- 071 - Call for Writers - Dealing with Difficult Interactions
- 070 - OTF Communiqué - New Chair for the OTPP
- 069 - 2019-2020 Education Funding Submission Topics
- 068 - January Benevolent Council Meeting Date Change
- 067 - Member Mobilization Training
- 066 - MPP Lobby Day Package Available Online
- 065 - Attacks on French Language Services
- 064 - Pink Shirts to Fight Bullying