

## Provincial Executive Liaison Report

To: District 10 Council  
From: Harvey Bischof, President

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### 1. Ministry Initiatives Committee- Expanding Student Access to Online and Remote Learning

A special meeting of the Ministry Initiatives Committee was held on March 22. The Ministry said they have “a pressing item we wish to consult with you on regarding the proposed plans to expand access to online and remote learning in the publicly-funded education system. This is taking shape as a key priority for the ministry in the coming months, and we would like to present details around the next steps being considered for your collective advice and input.” At the meeting, the Ministry officials presented a slide-deck with a plan for the expansion of remote and online learning. Following the meeting they sent participants a copy of the slide deck.

The plan identifies three types of remote/on-line learning:

- Synchronous remote-learning – teachers would be employed by school boards, classes would be funded at 23:1;
- Teacher-supported on-line learning – teachers would be employed by school boards, classes funded at 30:1 (cap of 35);
- Fully independent online learning – teachers would be employed by TVO, Student to teacher ratio is not applicable.

The Ministry have framed the plan as providing choice, quality and equity for students and families. Andrew Davis assured the group that the government has no intention of changing any working conditions and committed to discussing the plan with affiliates.

#### Key Components

1. Boards would be required to provide synchronous remote learning:
  - as a permanent part of elementary and secondary schools effective September 2021. No additional admin. funding would be provided.
  - to students on snow days or during emergency school closures.
  - Students in remote learning would continue to have access to “desired supports through their physical school.”
2. TVO and TFO would become the gatekeepers and developers for online learning:
  - TVO and TFO, with input from trustee associations, would create and maintain a standardized list of online courses for each school system.
  - Content for the courses would be created by TVO and TFO and would be provided to school boards at no cost. Boards/teachers would be able to modify the content.
  - TVO and TFO would develop and implement a “provincial seat reservation system”
  - TVO and TFO would create a “centralized Centre of Excellence” for teacher professional development resources.

- TVO and TFO would establish a “global development strategy” re: online learning for out-of-province students. Boards would no longer be able to market to or enroll these students directly.
- 3. All students taking online courses would have access to connectivity, learning devices and a supervised space in which to work within their secondary school. Boards would be encouraged to utilize existing staff to supervise and support these students.
- 4. The online learning graduation requirement and opt out would be implemented effective September 2021 starting with those students who were enrolled in Grade 9 in September 2020-2021.
- 5. Online pedagogy would become a mandatory part of initial teacher education programs.
- 6. In addition to amending the Education Act to include the changes above, the government is proposing to create regulatory authorities:
  - to prescribe the roles and responsibilities of school boards, school authorities and other entities prescribed by regulation;
  - establish data-sharing processes; and
  - prescribe the use of technology infrastructure, such as software, information systems and/or technology-based instructional tools and resources

### **Implications**

The synchronous remote learning is optional and may get little uptake based on how parents have responded to remote learning during the pandemic. It will likely be used primarily by students with health issues.

The requirement to provide synchronous remote learning during snow days is an issue. This would have significant implications for teacher workloads. There are also numerous equity questions that will need to be addressed (e.g. What if there is insufficient tech/internet for all students /staff in a family to access remote learning simultaneously? What if buses are cancelled but schools are open?).

This plan may actually result in less choice for students to participate in in-person classes. The creation of a standardized list of online courses may result in small and/or rural schools opting out of offering in-person courses that are not highly sought after.

School boards will lose access to a current funding stream when they can no longer enroll out-of-province students.

The current consortia may have little role to play in offering online learning as TVO and TFO become responsible for managing online enrollment.

It is unclear who will be creating the course content. The reference to collaborating with third parties could provide an avenue for the use of private companies.

The possible collective agreement issues are still being determined and will require further details. Issues such as workload, staffing levels, board funding, etc. are being examined.

The creation of a central coordination framework and technological infrastructure opens the door for further privatization in the future.

The proposed legislation could provide opportunities for the government to regulate for-

profit entities to deliver online learning, and/or to control the tools and infrastructure that school boards would be able to use.

### **Actions**

- As offered at the March 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, OSSTF/FEESO has requested an additional meeting to further discuss the plan.
- Departments are reviewing the document to identify questions to be raised at the additional meeting.
- A written submission is being drafted and will be presented to PE April 6<sup>th</sup> for approval. The government has extended the deadline for submissions to April 7.
- OSSTF/FEESO is requesting a meeting with the government to discuss the collective agreement implications of the plan as per the terms of the central agreement.

## **2. Bill 254, Protecting Ontario Elections Act**

### **Background**

#### [Bill 254, Protecting Ontario Elections Act](#)

Attorney General Doug Downey (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte) introduced a bill that would amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act. While the introduction of bills is the prerogative of the government or any MPP, this sweeping election bill was completed without any forewarning or prior consultation with Ontarians or the opposition political parties. The need for this bill is not clear except to make it easier for any governing party, particularly the current PC government, to fundraise more money and to stifle democratic debate by imposing severe limits on the expression of political dissent prior to an election.

### **Analysis**

Although the bill has a number of proposals including expanding advance voting days, the three most pertinent elements are:

- Despite pre-election 2018 hype characterizing public subsidies to political parties as “political welfare,” Premier Doug Ford and the PCs have proposed to continue the current per-vote subsidies for political parties until the end of 2024. The amounts currently are \$5.9 million annually for the PCs, \$4.9 million for the NDP, \$2.9 million for the Liberals, and \$672,000 for the Greens. They will be adjusted for inflation and will also be adjusted after the 2022 provincial election as the vote totals change for each party.
- The bill would increase the annual contribution rates to political parties, constituency associations, leadership candidates and election candidates from \$1,650 to \$3,300. This would obviously help any governing party, especially one with deep-pocketed business supporters like the PCs. Although the opposition parties might benefit too, the total effect would not be anywhere near as positive as for the PCs. Despite the increase in contribution rates, the PCs are still maintaining the ban on corporate and union donations, which, of course, continues to favour their well-heeled supporters.
- The most jarring part of the bill that would impact OSSTF/FEESO’s involvement in any provincial election campaign is the extension of the current six-month limitations on third-party advertising to one full year. For example, the call for the June 2, 2022, election is scheduled for May 4, 2022. In a six-month pre-election window, that would be roughly the beginning of November 2021. In this bill, the limitations would now extend to the beginning of May 2021. This means that the present third-party advertiser spending limit of \$637,200 in the six months before the issuance of the election writ will be expanded to 12 months. The current \$106,200 spending limit

during the campaign period remains the same.

At the same time, the PCs are tightening the rules around collusion by third-party advertisers. The bill will now further limit the sharing of information, vendors or “a common set of political contributors or donors” with another third-party advertiser that represents the same political causes. This means that OSSTF/FEESO would face even more onerous restrictions in working with like-minded partners, like OECTA, ETFO, AEFO, CUPE or OFL, on issues of mutual interest. For example, it is quite conceivable that a strike action like “No Cuts to Education” would be ruled collusion if conducted within the one-year point of a call of a provincial election. This is would be disastrous for any political action.

**Legislative Process**

At the time of writing, the bill passed 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading in the Legislature and Committee hearings have been scheduled. The President presented OSSTF/FEESO’s submission to the Standing Committee on Monday, March 29. After Committee hearings have concluded, the bill will be called for 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading. Although the opposition parties will vote against the bill, the PC majority should easily pass this bill.

**3. 2022 Provincial Election Riding-by Riding Consultations**

In continuing our preparation for the 2022 Provincial Election, an election readiness virtual consultation concentrating on a riding-by-riding analysis will be conducted on Wednesday, May 12 and Thursday, May 13. Unlike previous elections, our riding-by-riding consultations need to happen sooner because we need to take a much more assertive role in preparing and focusing our local districts/Bargaining Units for this election. This election, more than most in the recent past, is critical to the continued success and viability of our publicly-funded education system.

The meetings will be divided into four half-day sessions and will facilitate discussions about strategy and planning for each riding.

Each Bargaining Unit will be entitled to send two (2) representatives to the consultation. The representatives should include the Bargaining Unit PAC Officer and/or the person responsible for election readiness.

Members of the 2020-2021 Communications and Political Action Committee (CPAC) will participate with their respective Bargaining Units and will be fully funded in addition to the two member limit per Bargaining Unit. They will not count against their local BU’s complement.

As well, the provincial Election Organizers will attend and be involved with their assigned districts. They too will not count against their local BU’s delegation.

<p>In the riding-by-riding consultations, Districts and Bargaining Units will meet in the following groups:</p> <p><b>Group</b></p>	<p><b>Districts / Bargaining Units</b></p>
<p>North Central and North West</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4, 31, 35 Algoma 5A, 5B, 6A, 6B</p>
<p>Central</p>	<p>13, 14, 15, 29</p>
<p>Toronto</p>	<p>12, 34</p>

East	25, 26, 27, 28, 33, 35 U of O, Saint Paul, 30
South West	9, 10, 11
South Central	7, 8, 18, 24, 32 (unité 64), 35 WLUSA, TARA
South Horseshoe	21, 22, 23, 32 (unité 58), 35 Brock
905 Belt	16, 17, 19, 20, 30

Wednesday May 12, 9:00 – 11:30 AM  
North Central, North West and Toronto

Wednesday May 12, 12:30 – 3:00 PM  
Central and East

Thursday May 13, 9:00 – 11:30 AM  
South West and South Central

Thursday May 13, 12:30 – 3:00 PM  
South Horseshoe and 905 Belt

Registration will close on Friday, April 23, 2021.  
Equity caucuses will occur for this event.

#### **4. Here for Students Campaign – February Insights**

For the past few months, the *Here For Students* campaign has continued to focus on exposing the poor decisions of the Ford government around education policy. A new advocacy letter campaign was created in January to encourage supporters to send an email to their MPP (cc. to Minister of Education, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education, and the Premier) calling on them to “step up” and bring about better safety and learning measures now.

*Here For Students* has facilitated advocacy through organic social media posts, and emails to supporters encouraging them to send a message to the government.

Some February highlights include:

- Over 5,600 website page views;
- Average time users spent on the “we need government to step up” page – 2.5 minutes;
- Total email subscribers – 66,919;
- Over 23% of subscribers open the emails we send;
- About 3.4% of subscribers click the “email your MPP” function on average in February.

We are not investing any money into paid advertising through social media. All activity and actions are organic.

We are continuing to push out advocacy newsletters to our email list on a steady basis, usually once every 10-14 days, to highlight flaws and failures in the Ford government plans for education during the pandemic.

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

A meeting of the Teacher Education Staff Work Group was held on March 2, 2021. This meeting included representatives from OTF and each of the four teacher affiliates.

Assigned Staff from the Educational Services Department attended the meeting on behalf of OSSTF/FEESO. The meeting agenda included the following items: OTF resolution regarding Pre-service programs, feedback to OCT Consultations, and follow-up on the February 5-6 OTF/Affiliate Symposium.

### **Items of Interest**

The OTF Executive requested that the Teacher Education Staff Work Group (TESWG); develop a plan composed of potential lobbying actions that OTF and its Affiliates could take to ensure the integrity of teacher education pre-service programs at Ontario Faculties of Education. The initial discussion has generated challenges, concerns, and who best to target messaging for each issue: Faculties of Education, the College of Teachers, and/or the Ministry of Education. The goal is to develop a joint message for consideration by April.

The OTF/Affiliate Symposium held on February 5-6, entitled *Creating Conditions, Conversations and Collaboration for Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in Teacher Education*, was, by all accounts, very well received. 87% of those who completed an exit survey reported being 'very satisfied' with the symposium, and the remaining 13% were 'satisfied.' Ideally, we will stick with this format, where participants have a range of workshops from academics, affiliates, and community activists to choose from, in addition to a variety of keynotes.

### **Feedback to Ontario College of Teachers' Consultations:**

#### Foundations of Professional Practice – Feedback through an Anti-Oppression Lens

OTF and the affiliates had a great deal of input into the original document. Applying an anti-oppressive lens in one sense is like trying to rebuild a house with a coat of paint. Perhaps it would be better to start over, but that is a large project and not what OCT is asking for.

Assigned OSSTF/FEESO staff shared suggestions as to additional language regarding anti-oppression and equity, based on input from staff with assigned equity portfolios. For example, "Oppressed and equity-seeking groups must see themselves in both the curriculum and in pedagogy."

ETFO has done more work on this in consultation with their Additional Qualification staff. OTF and affiliate representatives provided feedback on the ETFO suggestions, indicating where less might be more, as the original document covers a good deal of equity in more broad-stroke language. For example, the document includes the following, "College members strive to be responsive pedagogical leaders who are respectful of equity and diversity within Ontario's classrooms and schools." OSSTF/FEESO staff recommended adding "with attention to oppressed and marginalized students and staff with an aim to dismantle oppression and racism in education." Getting more specific with language could lead to a situation where it is difficult to monitor, manage, or challenge teacher practice on their anti-oppression lens as applied to individual lessons and pedagogy.

#### Teaching and Learning through e-Learning – Thought Exchange

The main question in this invitation to provide feedback is whether or not there is support to move the *Teaching and Learning through E-learning* AQ course from a single Schedule C course to a Schedule D 3-part AQ. OTF will draft a response on behalf of OTF and the Affiliates that will indicate no support for making this course a three-part specialist for a number of reasons, including but not limited to the fact that there already exists a 3-part specialist *Integration of Information and Computer Technology in Instruction*. There are also concerns about the expansion of e-learning in the province as a permanent direction post-pandemic, and expanding teacher qualifications in this area could somehow add to the normalization of mandatory or private e-learning for students who are not best served in this

way. The platform for providing input to OCT is anonymous, limiting the ability to provide responses from a federation perspective in any case.

The next TESWG meetings are scheduled for:

- Friday, April 9, 2021 Meeting with Ontario Association of Deans of Education
- Tuesday, May 11, 2021

## **6. Plan for Ongoing Outreach to Parent/Community Organizations 2021**

Parent and community outreach is paramount as we move forward as an organization toward the next provincial election. Parent and community allies are essential if we want to defeat the Ford government. Not only do we need to continue to reach out to current allies in meaningful and inventive ways, but also we need to build further parent and community support away from the noise of the current issues that are dividing us. There are parent and community groups that we are regularly reaching out.

There are varying degrees of engagement with these groups. We are currently reaching out to several other groups in hopes of adding them to our list of allies. They are:

- Urban Alliance on Race Relations
- Ontario Education Workers United
- Parents of London Ontario
- School Council Chairpersons of Ontario

Outreach from the Provincial Office is important, but engaging and encouraging our Districts to research, outreach and build contacts with local organizations is crucial.

Parent and community group input is important in building current relationships, fostering new relationships, and bringing other voices into our messaging. Outreach should be consistent with the main purpose being collaboration and support of events/actions as well as unifying like-minded groups to defeat the current government in the next Ontario election.

Next steps for outreach can include:

- Reaching out through our *Here For Students* website and providing resources regularly;
- Community ally gatherings – in locals – bringing together the union and our community partners with parent groups (town halls, virtual webinars);
- Building our parent council influence through regular contact, asking for input, surveys and information sharing;
- Assisting with donations;
- Tying in our Election Organizers to assist with outreach and building momentum in communities;
- Late winter/early spring webinar to engage parent and community groups focusing on student advocacy followed by creating advocacy resources for parents;
- A wider reach for our Community Ally newsletter – offer translation in various languages for our allies to share;
- Asking parent and community groups for material for our School Council newsletter and sharing it with school councils through the school council newsletter and our school council representatives;
- Increasing outreach to school council chairs;
- Inviting parent and community groups to give input into our education platform through a survey; and
- Inviting school councils to give input into our education platform through a survey.

## 7. People for Education Annual Ontario School Survey

On February 23<sup>rd</sup> People for Education released their Annual Ontario School Survey. The 2021 Survey focused on principals and the impacts of COVID-19 on Ontario's schools. The survey results include responses from 1173 schools from across Ontario, including 906 in-person, 226 hybrid<sup>1</sup>, and 41 virtual schools.

Principals indicated that their workloads have grown as COVID responsibilities have been added. Unsurprisingly, as is the case with our members, they identified that "there was no move to postpone or eliminate existing tasks such as School Improvement Planning, EQAO testing, or implementing new curriculum." 50-60% of principals reported that their levels of stress are unmanageable. The survey asked principals to rank the following COVID-related issues:

- Coordinating staffing
- Scheduling courses
- Space & distancing
- Staff tech knowledge
- Health & safety
- Troubleshooting tech issues
- Communicating with parents or staff
- Managing student enrolment
- Ventilation

The highest ranked issues varied by school type. Again the results reflected what OSSTF/FEESO has been saying. Space and distancing, coordinating staffing, and Health and Safety issues ranked highest with principals of in-person schools. For principals of virtual schools the highest ranking issues were managing student enrollment, coordinating staffing, and communicating with parents or staff. Hybrid school principals ranked coordinating staffing, managing enrollment and space and distancing.

While People for Education renewed their call for the creation of an Education Advisory Task Force, the principals made a series of more specific recommendations. These include:

- More teachers (French, Special Education, Supply, Occasional) and school staff (Educational Assistants, Designated Early Childhood Educators, office staff, supervision staff);
- No more new initiatives (e.g., for the District School Board (DSB) and/or the Ministry of Education (MoE) to stop adding new curriculum pieces/changes);
- More time (more Professional Activity (PA) days; uninterrupted holidays; extended breaks for mental health & for planning; shorter school day to allow time for planning; more lieu days with "supply principals" to fill in rather than relying on principals from other schools);
- To receive information of changes/decisions from DSB and MoE before they're announced publicly and with enough time and enough detail to implement those changes.

As these asks align well with the positions that OSSTF/FEESO has been taking, staff is discussing with Sussex how to amplify the recommendations through our *Here for Students* website.

## 8. World Education Support Personnel Day

In 1999, OSSTF/FEESO created Support Staff Appreciation Day to celebrate the valuable contributions of education workers and acknowledge their important roles within publicly funded education in Ontario at all levels. Through a motion from the Provincial Executive to Provincial Council, OSSTF/FEESO made the decision in 2020 to immediately end our

recognition of the OSSTF/FEESO Support Staff Appreciation Day and begin celebrating World Education Support Personnel (ESP) Day on May 16.

Similar to World Teacher's Day, World Education Support Personnel (ESP) Day was launched in connection with Education International's (EI) first-ever ESP Conference in 2018. This is a day to recognize the extraordinary contribution education workers make to our schools and our union. In addition, OSSTF/FEESO celebrates the work of education workers across the globe, emphasizing their role to ensure the delivery of high quality education, and to shine a light on the challenges that education workers face in their workplaces.

This year, the Recognition and Promotion Subcommittee of the Communications and Political Action Committee put together a plan to celebrate OSSTF/FEESO World ESP Day. This plan involves recording a message from each member of the Provincial Executive (PE).

This message will be sent to members via social media and a DBU memo. There will also be information regarding the promotion of World ESP Day sent to Bargaining Unit leaders.

For more information on World Education Support Personnel Day, please visit: <https://www.ei-ie.org/en/detail/15830/history-in-the-making-education-international-launches-first-worldwide-education-support-personnel-day>

## 9. OFL Laurentian Crisis Campaign

At the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Heads of Unions meeting on Monday, March 15, participants were presented with a proposal for the OFL to engage in a short, concentrated campaign on highlighting the financial crisis at Laurentian University. This specific campaign would complement ongoing OFL persuasion and acquisition campaigns.

The financial difficulties at Laurentian University will have a significant impact on public sector workers in post-secondary institutions, including OSSTF/FEESO members. The OFL requested support for this campaign, which will incorporate key messaging from the Ontario College and University Faculty Association (OCUFA).

The OFL estimates this campaign to cost \$105,000, including \$75,000 of digital ad spend, which would take place through the month of April, and include static graphics, a short video, social posts, and connection to the *Save Laurentian* web landing page. The ads would run in Sault Ste. Marie (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities Ross Romano's riding), Sudbury (where Laurentian University is located), plus nine other battleground ridings that contain at least one college or university campus.

Ross Romano has been under significant public criticism for saying very little about the situation at Laurentian University, citing that the bankruptcy of the university is "before the courts," and he cannot comment. The Minister's absence on this issue is gaining notice.

The Provincial Executive has approved a \$20,000 donation to the OFL campaign in support of the Laurentian University campaign.

## 10. Canadian Labour Congress Triennial Convention 2021

The delayed Canadian Labour Congress Triennial Convention, which was scheduled to take place May 4–8, 2020, in Vancouver, British Columbia has been re-scheduled as [a virtual convention](#) for June 16-18, 2021. To accommodate all CLC members from all of Canada's different time zones, the convention will run from 12:30 PM to 5:00 PM daily.

Interested OSSTF/FEESO members, who are delegates at local CLC Labour Councils, should review the following information which is found in DBU #174/2020-2021.

- 1) The Number of Delegates and their Allocation
- 2) Convention Expenses: Cost-sharing between districts and Provincial Office
- 3) Financial Support for Labour Council Presidents
- 4) Financial Support for OSSTF/FEESO Equity Caucus Delegates
- 5) OSSTF/FEESO Candidates for CLC Positions
- 6) OSSTF/FEESO Pre-Convention Delegate Meeting

Registrations must be submitted online by no later than Monday, April 26, 2021. Please log into the Upcoming Events section on the Registered Users homepage of the OSSTF/FEESO website. A link to the CLC/CTC Event with the Cvent registration page is located there. For convention registration information, please contact Wendy Ozyer at [wendy.ozyer@osstf.ca](mailto:wendy.ozyer@osstf.ca). For further information, please contact Paul Kossta at [paul.kossta@osstf.ca](mailto:paul.kossta@osstf.ca)

#### **11. Trinational Coalition for the Defense of Public Education Conference**

The Trinational Coalition for the Defense of Public Education Conference cancelled last spring will now take place on Friday, May 21 to Saturday, May 22. The event will occur using a virtual platform.

OSSTF/FEESO is part of the organizing committee, along with representatives from the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), Los Rios College Federation of Teachers (LRCTF), IDEA Network / RedSEPA, and the Mexican section of the Trinational Coalition.

The current plan is to hold a Friday evening session that would include a welcome, greetings from participating countries (Canada, United States and Mexico), and a plenary session.

On Saturday, four short plenary sessions and a national discussion about a conference declaration are to occur. OSSTF/FEESO and BCTF are tentatively representing Canadian perspectives at the plenary sessions and are coordinating who will lead each presentation.

Given the time differences between Ontario, Mexico and British Columbia, the Friday session will be from 6:30pm – 10:00pm, and Saturday session will be from 12:00pm – 8:00pm.

Delegation limits are in the process of being established, but it is estimated that each country will be able to send between 100 – 150 participants to the virtual conference.