



From the President

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Welcome Back

It's hard to believe we're already almost a month into the new year and just about to start our final term. 2018 could be a year of change in Ontario education depending on the outcome of the provincial election this June.

The GEETF will also be holding elections this spring. Positions to be elected this May include President, First and Second Vice Presidents, Secretary, Health & Safety Officer, and eight additional Executive Members. Nomination forms and further information will be sent out shortly.

ETFO's Member Violence Survey

ETFO released the results of an all-member survey on violence in our schools. What we all know was made clear – student aggression and violence has been on the rise in recent years; the methods of addressing the violence so far have been mainly ineffective; the problem is Ontario-wide; and it needs to be solved. Key messages from those who completed the ETFO survey:

- 70% of ETFO members have personally experienced or have witnessed violence.
- 80% say that student violence is having a negative impact on their teaching and classroom management practices.

- An entire generation of students is having their learning disrupted and violence is becoming normalized in our school system.
- Over a third of ETFO members have suffered mental stress, physical injury or illness due to violence.
- Only half of our members report that they get adequate support from EAs, CYWs and social workers.
- Half of those surveyed feel that after reporting a violent incident to their principal, there was no follow-up or investigation by the principal.

Clearly a coordinated approach to solving this growing problem needs to be developed. The issue is a complex one and effective solutions must come from the government. ETFO advocates that the provincial government needs to...

- hold principals and school boards accountable for compliance with health and safety requirements and reporting of violent incidents.
- hire more support workers.
- add more community resources to provide earlier assessments for students with high-risk behaviours as well as mental health supports.
- increase special education funding.

Survey result details can be found on the ETFO website under MEDIA RELEASES.

Update on Bill 115 Remedy

Efforts continue on the part of ETFO to get improvements to our Bill 115 remedy. Unfortunately, an improved offer is not on the table at this time. ETFO continues to explore legal means to achieve a settlement that more fairly addresses the losses imposed by the *Putting Students First Act* (2012) which eliminated sick banks and had other negative impacts on teachers. In a landmark decision in 2016, the Court found that the government violated the Charter rights of education sector unions when it imposed Bill 115. Justice Lederer did not set out a remedy in the decision, leaving it to the parties to determine. If ETFO couldn't work out a remedy with the government, the matter would be referred back to the Court.

Quick Facts on Bill 148

You've likely heard about the recent increase to the Ontario minimum wage and the press that this garnered as some businesses cut back on worker benefits or increased their prices. The increase in minimum wage is one part of the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*.

This legislation includes many changes, some of which may have a positive impact on ETFO members. As these changes are so new, it will take time for employers and employees to understand and implement these benefits. Like all labour law, the application of it often requires updated collective agreement language and mediated settlements. So at this point there are many questions, but not enough definitive answers. We will share more with you as ETFO provides us with clarification on these entitlements.

Update on Grand Erie 'Fail to Fills'

Representatives from GEDSB Human Resources met with Kevin Utley (Occasional Teachers' President) and myself to review the effectiveness of our strategies that were implemented in November to reduce the number of unfilled occasional teacher assignments. During the fall, the issue of 'no fills' had become a far too common experience across the Board and was having seriously negative impacts.

Based on anecdotal results of our efforts, initial actions have been effective. The number of OT fail-to-fills is down. There will be a few 'high needs days' in term two which may result in a few no-fills. However, the coordination of the Board calendar which limits the number of occasional teachers pre-booked for the same day, avoiding Friday and Monday PD bookings, avoiding half-day assignments where possible, the hiring of more occasional teachers, efforts to make OTs feel supported by positive working conditions in your school, and ensuring the accuracy of information in ADS have all contributed to a reduction in no-fills. We will continue to monitor the situation and take further action as needed.

Upcoming Events

- FEB 9 Due Date to complete the Mutual Exchange/Transfer Survey
- FEB 12 Workshop – Planning for Science/Social Studies in split grades
- FEB 15 Social Event – Escape Key for teachers in their First Five Years
- FEB 21 & 26 Union Steward Training
- FEB 21 Representative Council