



# From the President

March—April 2012

Editor: Donna Howey President

Grand Erie Elementary Teachers Federation

## Socialization into teaching—contracts, negotiations and all.

Recently, I was part of a speakers' panel at Nipissing Faculty of Education. I was amongst principals, a new contract teacher who spent time as an OT, and a teacher at the 5 year mark. Each speaker contributed their perspective and the world of elementary education appeared positive, challenging and rewarding—as it is.

My contribution had to bring up that ugly word— politics. Politics impacts our working conditions and politics impacts our contract negotiations. As we enter this round of negotiations, I respectfully suggest that you don't let the politics or the media coverage discourage you or stress you out.

Look around at the other teachers in your building. These people are your supports and allies. Experienced teachers who have been through previous negotiations will be able to offer reassurance to newer teachers. We do need to support each other and our CBC team. We don't need to become upset by everything we hear in the media. The media usually presents the portion of the whole story that will incite the most interest and controversy. That's not how real negotiations happen.

Below - ETFO President, Sam Hammond, shakes hands with GEETF Collective Agreement Officer, Dave Peters at a recent GEETF steward training session.



**GEETF Meetings and Events are listed on our website**

[www.gefed.on.ca](http://www.gefed.on.ca)

**Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/GEETF>

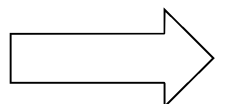
**Please take a moment to "LIKE" us on Facebook to receive updates with activities within the local and at the provincial level.**

## Our Office

You will find us at our office at 49 Dalkeith Drive, Units 1 & 2, Brantford. Our phone number for local calls is 519 753-9291 and toll free at 888 753-9291. The office is open each day from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Many evenings the office is open much later due to meetings and workshops. We also endeavour to leave Fridays at 3:30 pm.

## ETFO President Sam Hammond addresses GEETF Stewards

At the recent GEETF steward training session, stewards heard Sam Hammond's account of ETFO's response to the provincial government's Provincial Discussion Table presentation. ETFO determined to not engage in these voluntary talks at this time. Both ETFO President Sam Hammond and ETFO First Vice-President Susan Swackhammer attended the first steward training session. ETFO Vice-President James McCormack attended the second steward training session and delivered much the same message. Dave Peters and myself are visiting every Grand Erie elementary school to meet with staff and ensure teachers understand the process for the upcoming contract negotiations.





## Saturday April 21st—Ontario Day of Action at Queen's Park

The OFL is organizing a “Day of Action Against Cuts” on Saturday April 21st, 3 to 5pm, at Queen's Park, Toronto. Buses are being arranged. Details will be passed on to teachers as soon as they are confirmed. Bring your colleagues, family and friends to Toronto on April 21st. Stand together for the kind of Ontario you want. Stand up for the public service that you are part of. We'll be there with our GEETF and ETFO flags standing together with teachers and families from across the province. We need to tell the government that we want them to make different choices for Ontario. We hope to have your support at this rally.

### Considering a Pregnancy? Prevent un-needed worry. Test for Fifth's Disease.

Each year, the GEETF Status of Women Committee sponsors two pregnancy-parental workshops. A Professional Relations Services ETFO staff member comes to our Local to present this workshop with local input provided by myself and the Collective Agreement Officer, Dave Peters. The session is always well attended by teachers who are anticipating starting or building on their families. On April 4th, there were about 20 GEETF teachers at the workshop; and as is intended, the issue of employee/teacher rights when Fifth's is present in the school came up.

Your released officers work with GEDSB Human Resources staff to ensure that the Collective Agreement and your employee rights are carried out according to current terms. One struggle that comes up every year is the unneeded stress and lost sick days resulting from teachers not knowing if they have immunity to Fifth's.

Simplify your life and prevent worry - get tested.

### Mental Health Week

The GEETF Social Justice Committee and Status of Women Committee are again sponsoring an event to mark “Mental Health Week”. This year, instead of hosting a dinner/speaker event, the committees decided to support the community events being held during Mental Health Week. On Wednesday May 9th, from 5 to 8 pm at the Joseph Brant Learning Centre, there is a “Wellness Wednesday”. All are invited to attend. A flyer will be sent electronically. There are other events planned in various areas of our board. In Simcoe, there is a mental health first aid training course and a family support group starting. Check out <http://cmha-hn.ca/> for more information.

### In the Staff Room

I have the opportunity to talk with a lot of teachers about their work and to observe which attitudes support a sense of well-being at work. I have compiled an incomplete list of teachers' successful strategies. Some strategies for managing the stresses of being a teacher are:

1. Treat your colleagues as allies—acknowledge the contributions of other teachers, learn from each other, support each other and overlook each other's shortcomings. Only other teachers know what the job is really like.
2. Don't personalize the behaviour of others.
3. Focus on what you love about your work.
4. Despite 3 above, prioritize the non-negotiables of your work—planning, assessing, reporting,...prioritizing and staying on top of the non-negotiable tasks means you won't have to panic as deadlines approach.

Completion of the EQAO Teacher Questionnaire is now voluntary for all teachers. ETFO members are advised not to complete the EQAO Teacher Questionnaire.