



From the President

March 2016

Editor: Dave Peters - President

Grand Erie Elementary Teachers' Federation

GEETF Meetings and Events are listed through our GEETF social media.

www.geetf.ca

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/GEETF

Twitter: @geetfo

Please take a moment to "LIKE" us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter

Reports and Forms

It may seem like additional work but...completing the appropriate forms following an incident is critical to ensure that legislated duties are complete, to ensure that insurance benefits will be in place, and to ensure that follow up supports will be provided. Here are a few key forms that teachers need to be aware of:

Incident/Injury/Disease—every time there is a workplace accident or injury incident; no matter how small.

Safe Schools Incident Report (SSIR) - every time a student exhibits a behaviour for which suspension must be considered.

Workplace Violence HR8 - every time there is an act or threat of violence against a worker.

Changes to the GEETF Executive – Part 2

As a result of recent elections, I would like to welcome new executive members Michaela Kargus (Russell Reid) and Carolyn Proulx-Wootton (Branlyn). Additionally, congratulations also goes to Cory Judson (Princess Elizabeth) who has moved into the role of Deputy Collective Agreement Officer. These changes are the result of our past president, Donna Howey, accepting a position at the provincial office. I have spoken with Donna and she appears to be thoroughly enjoying both her new position and living in Toronto.

There will be additional changes for the GEETF for the 2016-2017 school year. I have submitted notice to the GEDSB that I will be leaving the teaching profession by retiring at the end of this current school year. This being an election year for the GEETF, I felt that it was important to do this early so that all members may know in a timely manner. As has been announced, the GEETF Executive will be presenting some Constitutional changes at the Annual Meeting in May. These changes include a motion to add a 0.5 released position next year. The reason I felt it was important to inform the membership of my retirement was to allow those considering running for a GEETF release position, including President, to get their nomination in to the office before the April 15th deadline. For all release positions - President and Collective Agreement Officer currently and President, First Vice-President, and Second Vice-President if the motion is accepted at the Annual Meeting – members can only run from the floor if there are no nominations submitted by the April 15th date.

Of course, all positions are up for election in May, and I invite all members interested in being a part of the GEETF Executive to put your name forward for leadership in your local union. It is an exciting opportunity for all members to have input into the direction the Local takes in the next two years.

GEETF Awards - We are now accepting nominations for our GEETF Awards. Please consider nominating a teacher, or group of educators, who are making a difference in the lives of children through their leadership, initiative, or collaboration on a project that involves students, the school and/or the broader community. It's not difficult to make a nomination. It is good for all of us to celebrate the wonderful things going on in our schools!

All information is available on the geetf.ca website.

From the Provincial Office.....Tax Credit for Teachers!!!

Introducing a Teacher and Early Childhood Educator School Supply Tax Credit.

In recognition of the costs educators often incur at their own expense for supplies that enrich our children's learning environment, the 2016 Federal Budget proposes a new Teacher and Early Childhood Educator School Supply Tax Credit.

The proposed 15 percent refundable income tax credit will apply on up to \$1000.00 of eligible supplies (such as paper, glue and paint for art projects, games and puzzles, and supplementary books).

The proposal will apply to the 2016 and subsequent tax years, and will provide a benefit worth about \$140 million over the 2015-16 to 2020-21 period.

Many teachers have been waiting, in some cases their whole career, to see this type of tax credit, and therefore it is nice to see that teachers are FINALLY being recognized for the financial contributions they have been making for years to the learning environment. It is not a lot of money (at most, \$150 tax credit for up to \$1000 spent), but it is a start.

But let's not forget that many of the items teachers provide for the students in their classrooms should be provided by the school board, not teachers. The continual under-funding of our schools, and in particular the imbalance in funding between secondary and elementary schools, needs to be continually addressed.

For the present, remember to save your receipts for any purchases you might be making for the current fiscal year (tax year 2016). I anticipate further information will be provided regarding this tax credit as time permits for additional exploration of the budget.

The Battle for Professional Judgement.

In the Central Agreement, both OPSBA and ETFO agreed upon language to entrench the concept of "Professional Judgement" in the collective agreements for all locals across the province. This is a very important step for ETFO members – it is ETFO's position that professional judgement will not be applied only in reporting and assessment circumstances, but rather, it will be applied in many aspects of our role as educators. ETFO will be providing much information to members in the next few months and beyond regarding their role in advocating for their right to practice professional judgement in a variety of ways. There will be challenges for our members as they advocate for their right to exercise professional judgment effectively, but it will be important for teachers to begin to take back this right in an attempt to control working conditions.

As you can imagine, this "battle" for professional judgment is already being waged in a variety of situations. As an example, I share with you an Ontario Superior Court decision handed down on March 7, 2016. Some teachers from a private school were disciplined by the OCT for allegedly failing to notify parents and police in a timely way of an assault on a 16 year old student on a field trip.

Of note in the case, the court found that the "Discipline Committee erred in law and acted unreasonably in failing to appreciate that the actions taken by the teachers were undertaken *as an exercise of professional judgement. The teachers gave considerable care to the decisions they made, and acted throughout in good faith and in what they believed to be the best interests of the student.*" The decision states later that, "*the teachers in this case faced a difficult situation and they brought their best, educated judgment to bear*" with compassion and always in the best interests of the student."

This is an important decision which provides insight into how a court will examine the issue of standards of practice applying to teachers, and a thoughtful analysis of how the teachers in this case exercised their professional judgement in a difficult situation. Also of importance is the fact that this ability to exercise professional judgement is recognized as going beyond assessment and reporting issues, and indeed into other aspects of a teacher's duties.

(Note: I am happy to send to anyone interested the full decision. An additional bonus is how the decision eviscerates the OCT Discipline Committee, suggesting that the OCT decision was "virtually unintelligible" and that the court, "*urged the College to provide training to its Committee members on the substantive issues they will be required to address and the process of writing effective reasons.*")