



From the President

December 2019

Shawn Martin, GEETF President – smartin@geetf.ca

Personal Thoughts on Where We Are

The current Ontario government is creating much chaos, uncertainty, degradation of essential services upon which many Ontarians depend and a great deal of stress on those of us who deliver public services.

I remember the battles that teachers fought the last time Ontario had a PC government. When the Harris conservatives held power they had a plan and a vision. The Ford government seems to have neither (unless one considers cutting the cost of public services a 'plan'). The Harris government had an organized vision, although not one that ETFO or any other union I'm aware of supported. Unfortunately, despite over a decade of the Liberals in power, Ontarians are still living with the damage caused by the Harris-Eves government two decades later.

The only 'vision' I see from the Ford government is to reduce spending on essential services. In my opinion this is not a government 'for the people' as promised. Adjectives that I feel describe the Ford government are unpredictable, volatile, insular, propagandist and disorganized.

Because of the Ford government's 'plan for the people', we are now in phase two of our work-to-rule strike action. Clearly our phase one strategy wasn't a strong enough message to Premier Ford and his Minister of Education. To date, central bargaining sessions have achieved nothing for Ontario

teachers and students. Serious and pressing issues such as violence in our schools, clarity on the kindergarten program, increased investments to better meet the requirements of students with special needs, some kind of commitment to fair hiring practices, and bargaining that is not constricted by a law limiting wage increases, remain unresolved.

The one thing that is clear is that we must stand together against cuts to public education, push back on every regressive step the Ford government proposes and implements, and we must hold strong in solidarity as we've always done, both in good times and in bad.

Currently, we are in one of those 'bad' times. But this too shall pass and eventually we will get through to better days.

The difference between teacher unions and this government can be summed up by the following statement: **Ford is trying to make public education cheaper. We're trying to make it better.**



A very well deserved Christmas Break is just around the corner. On behalf of myself, your Released Officers and your Executive Committee, we wish you very happy holidays.

Success is built over time, not overnight.
-Nicky Verd

Update on Local Bargaining

Your local Collective Bargaining Committee met over two days on December 4 – 5. OSSTF held a one-day full withdrawal of services on the 5th. On that day, your CB team joined our OSSTF colleagues on their picket lines. On the 4th, we joined an information picket held out front of MPP Bouma's office.

The CB Committee continues to prepare our local Preliminary Submission based on the feedback received from the membership online survey. We are also drafting wording to address articles in our Collective Agreement that need strengthening. We expect to have the submission ready for membership approval before March Break.



Pictured above is our Collective Bargaining Committee showing off 'Red for Ed'. Left to right are Pam Dogra (ETFO CB Rep), Carolyn Proulx-Wootton, Teresa Rothwell, Lori Burroughs Miller, Michaela Kargus, Nancy D'Aurora, Jennifer Orr, Kendra Kovach, Shawn Martin, and Cory Judson.

The OCT Raises Fees and Updates Advisory on Professional Misconduct

Despite the Ford government's decision to unilaterally impose a wage restriction on ETFO members, which we believe is a violation of our Charter rights, the OCT is raising our fee by \$20 to \$170 effective

January 1, 2020. That's a 13% fee increase. The College has a projected surplus for 2020 of \$1 million and the College's cash reserves as of September 30, 2019 were \$7.7 million.

As if a 13% fee increase isn't enough, the OCT has strengthened their language on professional misconduct of a sexual nature. Members need to be even more cautious as they interact with students and must maintain very clear professional boundaries to avoid unfounded allegations.

Mental Health Classroom Resources

The GEETF ad hoc Special Education Committee in partnership with the PD Committee hosted the ETFO workshop, *Mental Health Matters*. Excellent resources were shared with attendees. One that you may find useful is 'School Mental Health Assist' at <https://smho-smsso.ca/> which provides resources for both parents and educators on mental health, well-being at school and self care. Another online tool that was highlighted is the Ministry of Education resource 'Supporting Minds' at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/SupportingMinds.pdf>.

GEETF Calendar of Events

Please have a look at upcoming events on the GEETF calendar at geetf.ca. Through the online calendar you can access event flyers and registration details.

Jan. 8, 15 & 22 – Arts: GEETFeet dance club

Jan. 27 – Arts: Learn How to Play the Ukelele

