



From the President

May 2020

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We are living under what almost everyone would agree are the most uncertain and unusual of times. Conversations I have with my elderly family members reinforce my perception that few people can recall a time in their life as unnerving as this period has been, and continues to be.

We all want and need more certainty. Unfortunately 'for sure' answers are in short supply, including in Public Education. Every day I'm asked questions for which I don't have a satisfactory answer because a decision has not yet been made by 'the powers that be.' So **the goal of this newsletter is to give you a brief update on the main issues.** I don't have complete answers, but I can provide you with the latest updates. Please feel welcome to contact me if you'd like more details, if you'd like me to take your ideas forward, or just to chat about situations you're facing.

Central Bargaining

Together **we achieved our goal of an acceptable Central Collective Agreement.** The Agreement may not be all we had hoped for, but it offers much more than what could have been the case had we not given ETFO a strong strike mandate. The timing of the pandemic greatly influenced our collective decision making. But we also know that the future brings more opportunities to address shortcomings in Public Education.

June Report Cards

The Ministry has provided some direction on final report cards. However, I find **the direction on comments too vague.** I've raised this issue with the Board and ETFO Provincial. Directors of Education are also seeking greater clarification from the Ministry.

The actual wording from the Ministry memo states, 'Teachers should choose to include comments on the final report card **if they feel that doing so** would support the student's progress.' That statement indicates a choice in writing comments, so we do require better direction. June is fast approaching and I know **we need answers and clear direction soon.**

Continuity of Learning

ETFO members are making possible what we would have thought was impossible just a couple of months ago. There are very few standards for 'crisis learning,' so we must rely on 'common sense' and a 'do what we can' attitude to provide students with continued learning. Under such conditions, a **positive and supportive working environment** for all stakeholders is key to success. Your professionalism, skill set and care for students means that Continuity of Learning is working. This plan has evolved quickly thanks to the adaptability and dedication of education sector workers.

Synchronous Learning (Live Video)

ETFO emailed members on May 7th to provide greater clarity on the issue of real-time online learning. Over the past few weeks, **members have received lots of excellent professional advice** from ETFO, the Ontario College of Teachers and from our employer on this issue. We have just heard that **the Ministry expects teachers to be doing synchronous learning**. Members have many legitimate concerns. This turn of events means that provincial, and possibly local, decisions will need to be made to address this latest expectation.

School Year Calendar and PA Days

The Ministry is not approving final 2020-21 school year calendars and has **cancelled remaining PA Days for this school year**. June 5th is our Assessment and Reporting Day for working on report cards. This day is part of our Collective Agreement. We are waiting for clarity on this issue. ETFO was told by the Ministry that they would honour Collective Agreement entitlements.

Reimbursement of Personal Costs

ETFO continues to raise the issue of members incurring personal costs while performing their duties to deliver distance learning. **The Ministry is not providing direction on this issue** as some boards are refusing to reimburse these charges. The Deputy Minister told ETFO that they will investigate further so this remains an item that requires resolution. I am aware of the additional long distance and internet charges that some members are having to incur during this time. I have raised this issue with our Board.

GEETF Annual Meeting and Elections

As was previously communicated, your Executive Committee determined to postpone our Local Annual Meeting and Elections until September. The meeting was originally planned for May 20th, but obviously can't take place at this time. **The Local Annual Meeting and Elections has been rescheduled for Wednesday, September 23rd**. The terms of the current Executive, including the three released officers (President and VPs), have been extended until September 30th.

Both your Executive and Elections Committees have been meeting to determine how to proceed. **A 'Plan B' for online voting, and what to do in case we still cannot hold large in-person meetings in September are currently at the planning stage**. We will keep you informed as decisions are made. It is our hope that we can hold our Annual Meeting and Elections during an in-person meeting this September. But if this is still not possible, **an election will take place prior to September 30th**.

New ETFO Virtual Learning Resources

ETFO staff have developed a set of **resources that will assist members with the delivery of distance learning**. A new webpage is hosted on the main ETFO website that includes an extensive listing of webinars, webcasts, and resources. There is no cost to members to participate in these sessions. New resources will be added throughout the closure period. A link to the website is:

<http://www.etfo.ca/link/virtuallearning>

Every day may not be good...but there's good in every day. – Alice Morse Earle