



## President's Newsletter October 2021

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Dear GEETF Member,

I intended to write a September newsletter, but because so much was still being worked out and constantly changing, I thought it best to wait until things settled down more. If you would like the latest update on any professional issue, please call or send me an email and I can give you current information.

Following an absence of in-person teaching and learning of over four months, school reopening has been the main concern for members. Updated reopening guidelines were provided to school boards in August. As we enter October, members continue to navigate their implementation.

Everyone continues to do their best despite very challenging and uncertain conditions causing stress and some division.

It is at times such as these that I believe our best way forward is to remain professional, kind, considerate and supportive. Every person is living their own experience and cannot truly understand the experience of another. I strongly recommend that we focus on our professional responsibilities and meet the standards of our profession. Doing so will avoid issues, supports our colleagues, and creates the best environment where we may practice the art of teaching.

### Tips on Members' Use of Social Media

ETFO supports the responsible use of social media by members, provided its use is consistent with high standards of professional conduct. Social media can be a valuable teaching tool, engages "online activism" to generate positive social and political change, and supports our Federation during collective bargaining rounds. But please consider the following:

Communicating through networking sites tends to promote a more casual style than e-mail and may not meet the standards of professionalism expected of educators.

Posts on social media can be forwarded, taken out of context, copied, manipulated and impossible to entirely remove.

Employees can face disciplinary action if they make negative, false or malicious comments about their employer. It can be difficult to define the line between speaking freely as unionized workers and responsibilities to the employer. You may reach out to your Local office or to ETFO Provincial to help define that line. Assume your employer will read your posts and be professional at all times.



## **GEETF Membership Meeting and Collective Bargaining Elections**

Your Local's virtual Membership Meeting will take place on October 20<sup>th</sup>. Up-to-date reports will be presented, questions answered, and issues discussed. Elections for the next Collective Bargaining Committee will take place at this meeting. Members elected to the CBC will prepare for and play an active role in the bargaining process to replace our current Collective Agreement expiring in August of 2022. Details of this meeting and the CBC elections process have been emailed out to Stewards to share.

## **Balanced School Year Calendar Pilot**

Last year, the Board struck a committee to investigate piloting a balanced school year in one or more schools. I bring teacher and Federation perspectives as a member of this committee.

A school operating under a balanced calendar has fewer summer vacation days, but those days are reallocated as holidays during the normal academic year. The total number of instructional days remains the same.

The committee recommends consideration only of the following pairings of air-conditioned schools:

Hodge-Gretzky-Ryerson, Banbury-Branlyn, Central-King George, Cedarland-Brier Park.

Trustees will receive a report in November. If this pilot goes ahead, your Local will work with the Board on staffing and other issues that would have an impact on members.

## **The GEETF Takes Action for Truth and Reconciliation**

September 30, 2021 marks the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

The day honours the lost children and survivors of residential schools, their families and communities. Public commemoration of the tragic and painful history and ongoing impacts of residential schools is a vital component of the reconciliation process.

Orange Shirt Day is an Indigenous-led grassroots commemorative day that honours the children who survived Indian Residential Schools and remembers those who did not. The orange shirt is a symbol of the stripping away of culture, freedom and self-esteem experienced by Indigenous children over generations.

The GEETF Executive Committee directed me to write to the Prime Minister of Canada, requesting federal government assistance to expose the truths of the past buried in and around the former residential school in Brantford, known as the Mohawk Institute.

Members may read both the letter sent to Prime Minister Trudeau and the response we received from the Office of the Prime Minister. The letters are attached to the accompanying email as PDFs.

