

The Call Out

The Official Newsletter of the Occasional Teachers' Bargaining Unit

District 12

Volume 18, Issue 5

Summer 2020

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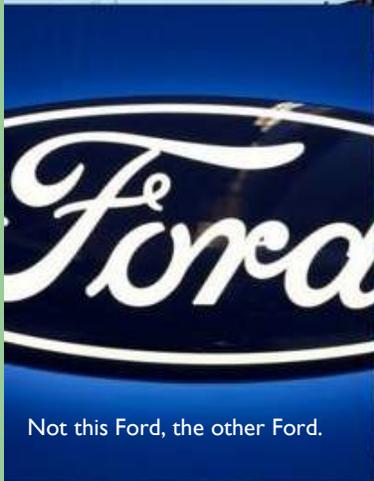
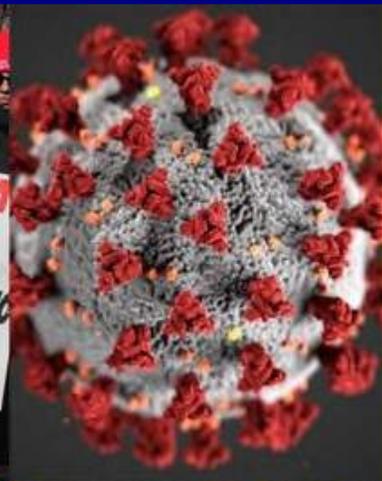
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Not this Ford, the other Ford.



A Year to Remember

LABOUR DAY PARADE September 7th, 2020

Join with your colleagues and friends for our annual march to the CNE in support of organized labour and good union jobs in fair and equitable work places.

Free admission to the EX and lunch at the Gladstone.

Cancelled

Meeting time: TBA
Meeting Spot: TBA

Employment Insurance/CERB

The TDSB transmits all Records of Employment (ROE) to Service Canada. Your ROE can be accessed at www.servicecanada.gc.ca

ROEs for OTs are uploaded to Service Canada between July 2 and July 7.

As soon as you apply for EI, Service Canada will convert it to CERB automatically. As soon as CERB is done you will have to reapply for EI. CERB will not use up your EI hours.

PLEASE NOTE: The application process has changed and reference codes are no longer required for school-related applications. Members should call the Employment Insurance Call Centre at 1-800-206-7218 from 8:30-4:30 Monday To Friday to get answers on how to apply for Employment Insurance benefits.

If you cannot access your ROE (at Service Canada) two weeks after your last day of work, please contact TDSB Payroll at 416-395-9642.

Members with specific questions about their EI claim or status should contact an EI representative at 1-800-206-7218. For specific questions on the CERB, members should use the COVID-19 EI helpline at 1-833-381-2725.

As the COVID-19 pandemic crisis continues to unfold, OSSTF/FEESO will be issuing frequent updates to provide members with as much pertinent information as possible. Please frequently check the **myOSSTF** section of the OSSTF/FEESO website for updated information.

Question about CERB? Contact: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application/questions.html>

**President’s Report,
Linda Bartram**

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A YEAR TO REMEMBER

This was and is indeed a year to remember. There has been turmoil in every corner- the pandemic, strike days in mid-winter, job loss, financial uncertainty and finally the police killings of Black and Indigenous people both in Canada and the US have left many of us angry, confused, saddened and fearful. Through all this, the work of the OTBU has continued. We negotiated to get pay for Daily OTs for the two weeks following the March Break when the board offered none. We negotiated the waiving of the 20 days to remain on the OT Roster and the reduction of the qualifying period for benefits from 90 to 60 days. We continue to respond to members’ questions and needs. We continue to represent members with the employer. We keep you up to

date with information that affects you. We will be sending information emails to you over the summer. As well, I strongly advise you to check your TDSB email on a regular basis.

We don’t know what September will look like in Toronto schools. The union is in regular communication with the board and we are consulted about plans for the future on a regular basis. However, we all wait on the provincial government for instructions. Please take care of yourselves and your loved ones over the summer.

And whatever happens in September, we will face it together in solidarity.

Total Job Stats Filled and Unfilled 2014-2020

	september		october		November		december					
	total jobs	unfilled										
2014-15	10948	63	14245	64	12537	64	9360	153				
2015-16	9764	37	13614	33	13858	58	9514	46				
2016-17	10586	17	14390	59	14628	116	11485	362				
2017-18	11563	52	14757	154	15125	281	8443	450				
2018-19	12252	69	14163	211	12871	466	7988	347				
2019-20	11788	21	13347	31	11595	85	5742	85				
	january		february		march		april		may		june	
	total jobs	unfilled										
2014-15	9848	46	12494	236	11555	52	13943	117	14828	220	9078	83
2015-16	11388	41	13513	142	11217	207	15025	335	17212	446	12129	250
2016-17	8726	53	13002	184	13225	368	13387	854	17220	908	11910	560
2017-18	7279	145	11545	774	12008	845	16019	1590	17673	1479	11449	1042
2018-19	7229	184	10929	736	9146	700	11808	1009	13962	1395	6792	794
2019-20	7001	49	11041	70	5215	104						

Chief Negotiator's Report

Paul Bocking, OTBU VP & Chief Negotiator
paul.bocking@d12.osstf.ca



The OSSTF Central Tentative Agreement was ratified by Teachers and Occasional Teachers across the province in mid May. The outcome was certainly bittersweet. Our progress of rolling back through strike action, the class size increases, mandatory e-learning, and other budget cuts originally announced by the Ford government in March 2019, was disrupted by the arrival of the pandemic, and the ensuing transformation of our social, political and economic environment. We reduced the damage of class size increases through collective action, and LTOs of at least 90 calendar days gained access to the permanent teachers' health benefits plan." We also obtained a two-year reprieve on the funding implications of mandatory e-learning's larger class sizes, and time to build an opt-out movement in every school. The Local Priorities Fund for Special Education was also restored. But the reality is also that countless classes have still been cut from schools across the province with class size average rising to 23:1. While public attention has moved on to the health emergency and the crisis in long-term care homes, we must remember how we got here, and address the new challenges that the pandemic brings to public education.

Meanwhile, local negotiations for a new collective agreement between the OTBU and the TDSB continue. The pandemic delayed negotiations for several weeks, but we have since met with the board on April 29, May 8 and 20, and June 17, 24 and 30. In between these sessions held over online remote video platforms, the OTBU negotiations table team and the larger Collective Bargaining Committee have met online many times to prepare our presentations and discuss our response to the board's proposals.

So far, our greatest frustration in negotiations has been the continued ramifications of the central/local split in bargaining issues. On September 6, 2019, the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) ruled on a dispute between OSSTF and the provincial government over which issues would be discussed at the local versus the central level. The OLRB sided almost completely with the government's position that as many issues as possible be placed at the central level, particularly as they related to compensation and workload. What is particularly frustrating is that it is more straightforward for the OTBU to negotiate issues that specifically affect OTs than it is for Provincial OSSTF, which represents many groups of workers, each of whom have their own respective priorities in addition to our shared concerns. Many have speculated that this complication and obstruction of negotiations is not a 'bug' but a 'feature' of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

While there was still a small possibility that some adjustments could be made while central bargaining continued, with its conclusion, the OTBU negotiating team had to remove from our brief a number of important proposals. These include increasing recognized experience for LTO placement, eliminating full period on-calls, reducing the threshold to access the benefits rebate, and increasing paid leaves.

However, we continue to push for (among many other issues):

- improved safety for all members in schools
- clearer and more complete daily job dispatch information
- speeding up the process by which LTOs obtain back pay and have access to school networks

(continued on the next page)

- ensure members are compensated if they lose scheduled jobs to attend an interview, or are asked to do additional duties as a part time LTO
- ensure the provincial government's new math proficiency test for faculty of education graduates cannot be used for any purpose by the board
- quarantine pay
- greater transparency of school preferred/priority

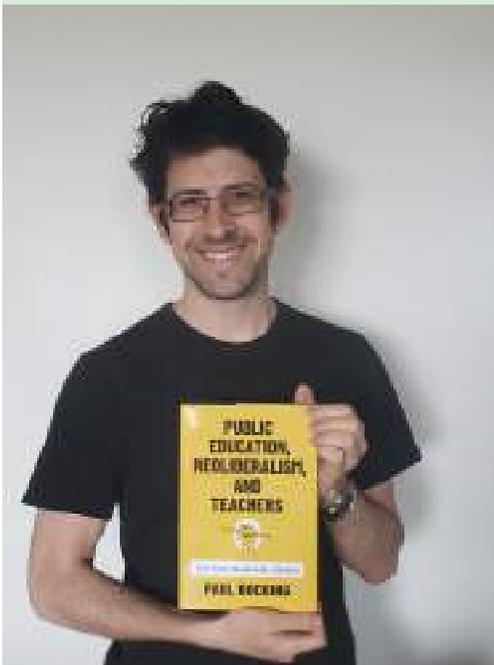
lists

Myself and the OTBU's Collective Bargaining Committee and Executive will keep members informed as our negotiations progress. In the meantime, I hope you have time to relax and enjoy yourself this summer, at the conclusion of a very eventful and difficult school year.

New Book Published May 2020...

Public Education, Neoliberalism, and Teachers: New York, Mexico City, Toronto

By Paul Bocking

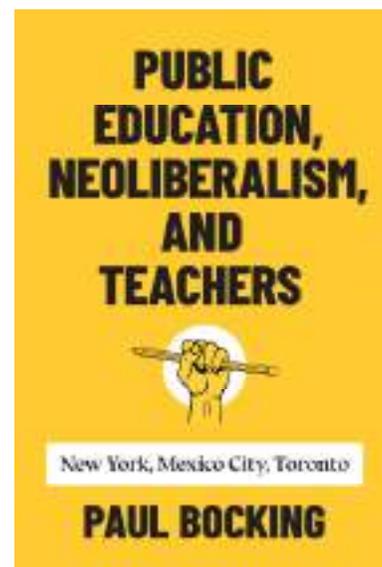


From pressure to "teach to the test" and the use of quantitative metrics to define education "quality," to the rise of "school choice" and the shift of principals from colleagues to managers,

teachers in New York, Mexico City, and Toronto have experienced strikingly similar challenges to their professional autonomy. By visiting schools and meeting teachers, government officials, and union leaders, Paul Bocking identifies commonalities that are shaping how teachers' work and public schools function.

While arguing that neoliberal education policy is a dominant trend transcending the realities of school districts, states, or national governments, Bocking also demonstrates the importance of local context to explain variations in education governance, especially when understanding the role of resistance led by teachers' unions.

University of Toronto Press



2020-2022 OTBU Executive



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Jamie Whitaker	jamie.whitaker@d12.osstf.ca



OTBU D12 Election

The OTBU D12 held its biennial election between May 14th-22nd to select the executive team for the 2020-2022 term.

This was the first time that OTBU D12 voting was entirely electronic. There were no paper ballots, nor walk in voting at Bathurst Street due to COVID-19. There was also no Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Provincial OSSTF gave all districts permission to postpone or cancel their AGMs this year. The OTBU D12 executive has chosen to postpone our AGM until the fall when a final decision will be made on if and when, circumstances permitting, an AGM can be scheduled.

Our constitution requires that elections must be held every two years. Fortunately, we had moved to partial electronic voting in 2018 with success. The Toronto Teachers Bargaining Unit (TTBU) with schools closed had to scramble to run their election using Simply Voting/Union Strategies as their election provider.

A breakdown of the vote is available on the [otbud12](http://otbud12.com)

website (www.otbud12.com). An encouraging sign was that the number of people voting increased by over 20% from the 2018 election.

The 2020-2022 executive can be found on page 6.

There are three new faces on the OTBU D12 executive: **Sarah Kamalzadeh, Elaine Karroum, and Jane Sorel** were elected as Executive Officers. **Vince Zambrano, Michael Frascchetti** and **Lillian Speedie-Court** were acclaimed as Second Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary respectively. **Linda Bartram, Paul Bocking** and **Jamie Whitaker** were re-elected as President, First Vice-President and Executive Officer.

Given the security of the voting system, the significant cost savings and increased voter turnout a motion will likely be brought forward to our next AGM (whenever that is) to move entirely to electronic voting.

Note: There has been a 60% turnover of the executive since 2014, a very healthy sign of our union.

And thanks to the Election Committee

A special thanks goes to the OTBU D12 Election Committee who supervised the election, verified the vote, were in contact with Union Strategies /Simply Voting before, during and after the voting period and dealt with any issues that came up. The Election Committee will meet in the fall to review the vote and make recommendations to improve the voting procedure.



The members were:

1. Frank Cirone, Chief Election Officer).
2. Jill Voges and
3. John McLennan

OSSTF Collective Agreement— (some cuts to education)

Education Worker and Teacher/ Occasional Teacher Central Ratification Results

OSSTF/FEESO requires a “double majority” for ratification, meaning that an overall majority of members must vote in favour, as well the majority of members in a majority of bargaining units. OSSTF/FEESO education worker members voted 90.1 per cent in favour of ratifying the Education Worker Central Agreement. OSSTF/FEESO teachers and occasional teachers voted 77.5 per cent in favour of ratifying of the Teacher/Occasional Teacher Central Agreement. The majority of members in 100 per cent of local teacher and occasional teacher bargaining units and in 100 per cent of local education worker bargaining units voted in favour, thereby fulfilling the double majority requirement for ratification. The results indicate clear support for the recommendation of the Provincial Executive and local leaders that these central agreements be ratified.

“OSSTF/FEESO members recognize these deals are

imperfect but provide needed stability in these trying times,” said OSSTF/FEESO President Harvey Bischof. “While we were able to fend off some of the Ford government’s most egregious attacks on education, members will not forget this government’s efforts to undermine publicly-funded education in Ontario.”

“It’s true that without our efforts things would have been much worse,” continued Bischof. “But larger classes, mandatory e-learning, and reduced funding for student supports will still be a reality in the province’s schools next September...OSSTF/FEESO will continue the fight to reverse these destructive policies.”



Highlights and (Lowlights) of the Agreement

A copy of the complete agreement and an expanded highlights section is available on the OSSTF website (osstf.on.ca) in the Member’s area.

General

- 3 year term - September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2022
- All salary grids, wage schedules, premiums, allowances increase by:
 - September 1, 2019: 1%
 - September 1, 2020: 1%
 - September 1, 2021: 1%
- Without prejudice to our charter challenge of the government’s wage-restraint legislation (Bill 124).
- The number of paid leave days is a central issue and cannot be bargained locally.
- Other aspects of paid leaves have been moved to the local table (criteria, access, etc.).

Pros:

- Under the agreement, OSSTF teachers will receive a one per cent increase to wages and salaries per year, for three years. Consistent with Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019, the agreement allows for annual inflationary increases to the funding for members who are eligible for benefits and for a one-time payment up to three percent of annual funding if the Employee Life and Health Trust's (ELHT's) surplus falls below a certain threshold, for benefit maintenance.
- Previously excluded Adult Day School teachers now eligible for inclusion, based upon ELHT criteria.
- A full withdrawal strike day shall not be treated as a break in the calculation of consecutive days for the purposes of determining a LTO assignment.
- New Provincial Benefits Committee to deal with matters related to the OSSTF ELHT.
- Parents can opt-out and school staff can recommend opting-out of e-learning.
- Hiring will continue to be governed by Regulation 274.

Cons

- Two (2) mandatory e-learning courses are required for graduation for the cohort of students entering grade 9 in 2020-2021.
- Regulation changes that fund classroom teaching positions (excluding e-learning classes) at 23:1 and require a maximum class size average of 23.
- Regulation changes that fund e-learning classes at 30:1 and require a maximum class size average of 30.
- Where there is reference in local agreements to staffing generators for classroom teachers, the local parties shall replace the existing language with language that references the regulations.
- Where the local Collective Agreement has workload limitations related to class size (caps, pupil/teacher contact, etc.), the local terms must be amended to allow for an average class size of 23:1. This can be accomplished in one of two ways: 1. Discussions at the local level to possibly amend language; or 2. Default amendment as described below: a) Local language remains in place b) Up to 10% of classes in the board may pierce existing caps by up to two (2) students (in addition to any local flex) c) Local PTC may be pierced to accommodate (b) above d) At most two (2) pierced classes per teacher per semester
- Where there is existing language or practice for e-learning class size limitations, it will be amended to a maximum class size of 35 students.
- No commitments that the Crown will not change the Regulation 274.

The Collective Agreement -not done yet

Negotiations: Part Two

There are two parts to our collective agreement. Part One is bargained centrally and deals with all items that involve money and compensation. Paid PD days for OTs, for example would be a central item. This part of the agreement was approved by the membership on May 14 and 15th.

Part Two is the local half of the agreement and is negotiated by each individual district and bargaining unit. This part deals with grievance procedures, cap sizes, dispute mechanisms, management rights and anything dealing with OTs and LTOs that is not considered a money or benefit item.

TDSB for a few months now, paralleling talks at the central table.

Paul Bocking leads the negotiating team. The negotiating brief is put together, reviewed and altered, as need be, by the Collective Bargaining Committee (CBC). The members of the CBC are **Linda Bartram, Paul Bocking** (OTBU D12 Chief Negotiator), **Coleridge Browne, Sarah Kamalzadeh, Elaine Karrouom, Michael Frascchetti, Lillian Speedie-Court, Danielle Jolley, Jane Sorrel, Jamie Whitaker** and **Vince Zambrano**. Negotiations will continue over the summer.

[Ed-Molasses in winter moves quicker than the TDSB negotiating team.]

The OTBU D12 has been negotiating with the

If you have questions on the amount of compensation that you received, contact your TDSB payroll assistant

Olinda D'Costa	Surnames: A, J, O, W	olinda.d'costa@tdsb.on.ca
Cassandra Singh	Surnames: B, I, N, V	cassandra.singh@tdsb.on.ca
Kathy Nanos	Surnames: C, F, Ro to Rz	kathy.nanos@tdsb.on.ca
Mary Ruth Mandia	Surnames: D, P, X, U, Y	maryruth.mandia@tdsb.on.ca
Nadine Ali	Surnames: E, H, K, Q	nadine.ali@tdsb.on.ca
Matthew Botts	Surnames: M, Ra to Ri	matthew.botts@tdsb.on.ca
Kim Lu	Surnames: S, To to Tz, Z	kim.lu@tdsb.on.ca
Ranjan Parmar	Surnames: G,L, Ta to Tm	ranjan.parmar@tdsb.on.ca

Things to Do Before June 30th

Offence Declaration

Each year as part of the TDSB renewal process, Occasional Teachers are required to complete an Offence Declaration Form. It is not a request for a new police reference check. To do this, log in as a Staff Member. Go to the TDSBweb section and look for the link under News for Staff. Follow the prompts to complete the form. Be sure to arrange for a confir-

mation receipt to be sent to your email. All employees of the TDSB, except those hired after March 31, 2020, are required to complete the 2020 Offence Declaration Form. Employees who are retiring or going on a leave of absence are required to complete their Offence Declaration before June 30th. Employees hired on, or after April 1, 2020 will be required to complete this 'Declaration' starting in April 2021.

It's June Renewal Time for All Occasional Teachers

You have until June 30, 2020 to complete the renewal process. Please note that if you do not submit your online renewal by June 30, 2020, your Occasional Teaching Position will be inactive with the TDSB effective August 31, 2020 and you will be unable to accept daily work as an

Occasional Teacher and apply for LTOs for fall 2020. Print out or record the confirmation number. Check that you receive a confirmation email.

AND yes, the TDSB website is a test of patience and endurance.

To access the renewal form on the web from home:

1. Go to **www.tdsb.on.ca**
2. Select **Staff** from the top right-hand side options (next to About Us)
3. Read the "**TDSB Staff Login Warning**" and click on **OK**
4. Under "**Log in with Your Account**" enter the last six digits of your employee# and password, then click Login. (If you have forgotten your network password, please click on the "Forgot your password" link to access Password Manager.)
5. Once logged in, on the "**Welcome to MyTDSB**" page, click on **TDSBWeb** (first link/selection on the top of the page) where you will be taken to the Internal TDSBWeb page.
6. You may be asked to log in again using the last six digits of your employee# and password, then click on Login. If you are not asked to log in again, you will be presented with the TDSBWeb page.
7. Under the **TDSBWeb banner**, click on **Employee Services**, then select **SmartFindExpress** from the left hand side menu, then select **Teachers/Occasional Teachers**.

Minimum Days Required for OT Roster

In light of COVID-19, and the inability to return to schools for the remaining school days of the 2019/2020 school year, **following negotiations between the OTBU executive and**

the TDSB, the required number of days that must be completed in order to maintain your Occasional Teaching Position as outlined in your Occasional Teaching Collective Agreements has been **waived** for the 2020/2021 year only.

Coleridge Browne

Coleridge Browne was the last delegate standing at the 2019 AMPA when the head OSSTF table asked who had been to the most AMPAs. Starting with who has been to over 5, then 10, then 20, then 30 and when it hit 40 Coleridge was all alone.

A teacher for many decades (who needs to know how many?), and an active OSSTF member for as long, Coleridge has been a strong defender of the rights of our members. He has served as Education Officer, Constitution Officer, Health and Safety Inspector, Joint Health and Safety Caucus member, Collective Bargaining Committee Member, strike picket captain and eternal AMPA delegate.



Coleridge has moved on from the Executive -but not far. He will remain as a Health and Safety Officer for the OTBU D12 and Executive Member Emeritus. AND most likely the last delegate standing at AMPA 2021.

OTBU Negotiates Lowering of Benefits Eligibility Threshold

Dear OTBU members,

After a series of meetings with board administrators and managers, the OTBU executive has negotiated a one-time reduction in the minimum number of days required to work during the school year in order to be eligible for the 50 percent rebate (payment in lieu) on benefits.

Due to the lack of work during the school closures, the minimum number of days you are required to work this school year to be eligible for the benefits rebate during the next school year has been reduced from **90 to 60 days**.

As is the standard practice, in July the TDSB benefits office will email all eligible members instructions on how to enroll in the benefit plan.

In Solidarity,
Your OTBU Executive

Occasional Teachers: Always Prepared

Included with this newsletter is a gift from your OTBU Executive! We want you to be mask-ready in case you are in situations where physical distancing is not possible. Hopefully you will find it practical, but if it is not suitable for any reason, please pass it on to someone who will use it. The mask is machine washable/dryable, made of polyester/cotton blend on the outside layer and 100% cotton next to your skin and manufactured in Toronto. It is not medical grade, but may be helpful in reducing the spread of COVID-19 especially if you are pre-

symptomatic or asymptomatic. The ear loops can be shortened by tying a knot or by pinching to desired tightness, folding down and stitching by hand.

More Information:

Visit Canada.ca/coronavirus for more information on face masks and coverings.

Email: PublicHealth@toronto.ca

Telephone: 416-338-7600

TTY: 416-392-0658



Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA) June 6, 2020. (delayed from March)

AMPA 2020 was a one day online meeting which took the place of the postponed three day March convention. There were 581 registered delegates, 80 alternates and 90 registered observers. Surprisingly, it was almost tech glitch free.

Harvey Bischof, OSSTF president, in his opening address acknowledged the Black Lives Matter marches happening around the province on June 6th, and expressed OSSTF's support of the protesters.

On the recent contract settlement with the province Bischof said that the OSSTF does not celebrate the agreement as a victory, but COVID-19 meant that

all "heat" on the government vanished. "We realize we could have squandered public support if we did not recognize what had happened," said Bischof. His main point was that while we cannot predict how this will all end, we do know that there will be an election in June, 2022. The provincial election will be the major focus of our future efforts.

While in times of crises leaders get an uptick in support the OSSTF must make sure that the government's failures in education and healthcare become a "stinking albatross" around their necks. "We cannot allow this pandemic to be a source of collective amnesia", concluded Bischof.

Strategic Action Plan

An update of the OSSTF Strategic Action Plan (SAP) called for increased support for local bargaining units, an emphasis on local office training and local treasurers can expect more assistance to im-

prove their financial accountability. Other SAP goals are to improve grievance procedures and IT security.

The primary focus of the SAP, and absorbing 2/3's of the SAP's budget is preparing for the June, 2022 provincial election.

"We Cannot Not Have a Budget"

Financial accountability and approving a budget are the main tasks of AMPA. The afternoon session was taken up with money. OSSTF Treasurer Earl Burt reported that revenues are down 1%, meaning that there will be a reduction in district rebates. (Ouch!). Basic district rebates instead of being up 2% will stay the same, meaning that with inflation rebates effectively decrease.

However, fixed expenditures are up, so 45 different budget lines were adjusted to balance this year's budget.

The meeting had a hard 4:30 adjournment, but AMPA has to pass a budget. A motion to extend the meeting was passed and a number of additional motions requiring financing were passed. A budget was approved at 6:35, two hours after the deadline. I am exhausted.

(more on this on page 15)

I never thought leopards would eat MY face; sobs woman who voted for the Leopards Eating People's Faces Party.



**June 2022
Election
Day**

AMPA: A Time of Reckoning

Jane Sorel

It was an AMPA like no other, in more ways than one. Quite like everything else that has been re-imagined during this pandemic, the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA), a 3-day meeting that is otherwise held at the beginning of March Break in downtown Toronto, was cancelled due to the Coronavirus, and was held virtually in a one-day remote meeting on Saturday, June 6th.

The 500+ delegates in attendance had opportunities to ask questions about the Annual Action Plan and vote on motions. But it became clear that the ambitious agenda of a condensed one-day meeting, with a focus on passing of the annual budget, would leave the equity motions on the table for another year.

The resounding voices of the delegates to have the equity motions heard by way of a meeting extension were initially met with resistance by the meeting organizers. An inappropriate hot mic comment by an OSSTF staff member that appeared to be directed at a racialized delegate who was about to advocate for the equity motions to be heard, left the delegation disheartened and exasperated with how things were unfolding. While the staff member clarified the comment and apologized, the harm was done. What was heartening were the many voices of delegates, including OTBU and other District 12 delegates, who acknowledged the hurt felt by the racialized members among us, and calling out our organization's complicity in perpetuating systemic forms of racism. By meeting's end, all the equity motions were heard and passed with resounding support during the 2-hour meeting extension.

The prioritizing of the organization's business over rank and file member voices at AMPA, has exposed

one of the ways in which structural racism plays out within OSSTF. But this is not the first time systemic racism has been noticeably visible at AMPA. At last year's AMPA, calls for a more equitable representation of racialized members of the AMPA delegation went unacknowledged by provincial leadership. After the events of this year's AMPA, the Provincial Executive has made a statement to this year's delegates that it is undertaking a process to look inward at the systemic issues surrounding oppression in our organization. The proof will be in the accountability measures put in place to ensure the process has credibility.

The voices of under-represented members are essential on this journey of re-imagining our organization. Your OTBU executive would like to hear from you. If you are a racialized member and would like to provide input on how we as a bargaining unit could make changes to be more inclusive, or if you would like to share your experiences as a racialized person within our union, we would like to hear from you. We are in the process of putting mechanisms in place to gather your input. We will communicate with you on this process in an all-member email.

This is a moment of reckoning for our organization.

Looking Back On Some Friendly Faces







The “Should Have Been Better” Collective Agreement Jamie Whitaker

Up to March 2020 the teacher unions were winning the battle for public opinion. The five unions were united and determined with the public on their side. The unions were the defenders of public education, seeking more support for our most vulnerable students and pushing for smaller class sizes. The public was not buying the PC strategy of portraying teacher unions as only interested in their pocket-books.

Then it all changed. COVID-19 was an unexpected shock to the system. Schools were closed until April, then until the end of May, then for the remainder of the year with some questions being raised about their ability to open in the fall. The provincial government moved from bashing teachers to flattening the curve

Unemployment rose above 20% for the first time since the 1930's. Many of those still working were doing so with reduced hours or faced the threat of unemployment at any time. With schools closed parents wanted to make sure their children continued with their education. Remote distance learning was viewed as better than nothing- despite its flaws, and it had a lot of flaws. Realizing the ground had shifted by the middle of April, four of the five teachers unions had settled.

The OSSTF was the last union standing.

A tentative agreement was reached between the OSSTF and the province on April 20th. It seems the government also wanted to get this issue behind them. On May 14th and 15th the tentative agreement was ratified by all TTBUs and OTBUs (90% and 77% respectively).

Is this a good deal? No. This is not a deal that would have been acceptable on March 1st.

Given the circumstances, if teachers had rejected this agreement, could they have gotten a better deal if negotiations had continued on into the fall? Probably not. This is a government that used the ‘not withstanding clause’ to interfere in a municipal election during a municipal election. Even the previous gov-

ernment, Wynne's Liberals, passed legislation (Bill 115) to deal with teacher unions. Public opinion in support of a teacher's strike had evaporated. Would this government, after COVID-19, have any qualms about calling in the legislature to pass a bill forcing the teachers back to work? Or imposing a contract? Would the public have supported them? Or cared?

The OSSTF had to make a choice- take a deal now or hope that a better one was still possible. The second option was a very, very slim possibility in the opinion of the OSSTF negotiators.

Were OTs well represented? No.

OTBUs at the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA) have been trying for years to get better representation at the bargaining table. Although OTs make up about 11% of the membership we are weaker than that, since some Districts have merged TTBUs and OTBU sections. Since Districts tend to vote en bloc their OTBU delegates remain a minority. The OTBU D12 has for the past four AMPAs held organizing meetings with OT/LTO delegates at AMPA to coordinate and have a louder voice. Some progress has been on that front. The OTBU D12 (your BU) had a motion set to come forward at this year's AMPA on OT representation at the negotiating table.

When “normal” returns, and the government has to deal with the deficit what is likely to happen? The PCs are ‘starve the beast’ supporters. Cut taxes to starve the government of the money needed to support government services, promise to balance the budget as economically prudent, then cut services, privatize crown government corporations and sell off assets. There is already talk of the coming round of ‘austerity’. Ex-PC Minister of Education John Snobelen in a Toronto Sun opinion piece proposed eliminating public education entirely (Toronto Sun, June 5, 2020).

The goal is now to defeat the PCs in the next election.

YOUR OTBU EXECUTIVE WISHES YOU A SAFE AND RESTFUL SUMMER HOLIDAY. SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER...

Read the "Safe Return for All" document from the OSSTF available on the OTBU D12 website and in the *myOSSTF* section of the OSSTF website.

Check the OTBU D12 website in August for updates on schools and the pandemic crisis.

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