

The following is the letter to the editor issued by the Minister.

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Teacher Contract Update

There have been many conflicting reports regarding the failure of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) to reach a four-year provincial framework agreement. I think it is important to set the record straight on what transpired at the provincial discussions.

Claims have been made that ETFO's final offer was costed and endorsed by the Ministry of Education. This is not the case. OPSBA did raise legitimate concerns about the financial implications created by ETFO's final proposal. The only agreement that the Ministry would have endorsed was one that was mutually agreed upon by both parties and within the financial parameters established by the Ministry. The ETFO final proposal was not mutually agreed to by the parties and was not within the financial parameters established by the Ministry.

There have also been claims that OPSBA had no authority to bargain on behalf of school boards. In order to bring the interests of school boards to provincial level discussions, a provincial body needs to be at the table. OPSBA represents school boards and had their full endorsement. ETFO committed to participate in the process with full knowledge that they were bargaining for a framework agreement with OPSBA. OPSBA negotiated on behalf of boards and were able to sign framework agreements with ETFO support staff, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, the Canadian Union of Public Employees and other unionized support workers.

So what happens now? Going forward, local bargaining will continue between ETFO and local school boards, but without the additional enhancements offered in a provincial framework agreement. Both parties knew the repercussions if they failed to reach a framework agreement.

It is regrettable that ETFO and OPSBA are assigning blame for what transpired at the provincial discussions. It takes two parties to come to an agreement and it takes two parties to come to an impasse. The impasse speaks to the need for an improved relationship between OPSBA and ETFO.

In no way does this development affect our government's respect for teachers and school boards. We continue to value the hard work they do every day in our publicly funded schools to support student achievement.

*Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Education*