



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

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Colleen Schenk
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TO: All Trustees, Chairs, Directors of Education, Senior Business and HR Officials,
and Communications Officers

RE: Next Stages with ETFO

Over the last few days there have been a variety of efforts by OPSBA to clarify what did and did not happen at the Provincial Discussion Table with ETFO. These efforts included our news conference yesterday and extensive media outreach. We recognize the frustration local boards must feel as this unfortunate process plays out—particularly regarding the misleading and inaccurate messages of EFTO.

As we look to the next stage we want to reinforce the critical need for all of us to remain united. ETFO is certainly working at doing the same with its members at all local meetings and through an aggressive media relations campaign.

One key strategy of ETFO is to position this situation as a failure by OPSBA to agree to their proposal which they define as fair and cost-effective. Obviously, if we had been presented with a fair and cost-effective proposal, we would have signed it. We have all experienced a local union strategy involving incorrect or misleading statements. The difference, however, is that this is playing out at the provincial level. Please refer to the OPSBA website for clarification www.opsba.org

We are also concerned that ETFO has tried to present this as OPSBA's fault. This is not true. ETFO and OPSBA were meeting at a Provincial Discussion Table as requested by the Ministry and in discussions funded by the Ministry.

At this point, ETFO is obviously feeding local federation presidents the media messages and these are both incorrect and inflammatory. We know these messages may cause questions from trustees and senior administration groups and we want to respond to the major inaccuracies from ETFO.

First of all, it is critical to remember that a key condition of the deadline extension given to ETFO was that any agreement was required to be within the government financial parameters for the provincial table discussion. The Province was clear that costs outside

of the agreed-upon framework would not be funded. No additional dollars were available from the Province. Period. ETFO understood this when they returned to the table, but their proposal did not comply with the Minister's condition.

It does not matter how many times ETFO proclaims that their proposal was within the funding requirements of the Province—the simple fact is that it is not. We have estimated that the ETFO agreement would cost Boards approximately \$463 million dollars in excess of the PDT funding over 5 years. Since the Ministry will not fund outside of the agreed upon financial parameters, our local public boards – you – would have to bear the extra \$463 million dollars. This would have caused many, if not all, public school boards to be in a deficit position.

Senior finance officials at the Ministry have confirmed in writing that our calculations are accurate and in fact, conservative. ETFO's proposals would have created an untenable burden for local public boards, even if one ignores the many elements of the ETFO deal that would have had a direct and negative impact on student success.

We should explain the so-called "giving up" of 3 percent of salary for preparation time in the last year. Although ETFO has characterized this move as a significant saving, the "front-end loading" of higher percentages in years two and three effectively wipes out any savings. In fact, under the ETFO proposal, teachers would still receive the same total salary over the 4 years of the contract as if they had been given the 3 per cent a year. The following simple example explains this apparent sleight of hand.

To simplify things, let's

- use a salary of \$1,000/year,
- round 3.985% to 4%, and 3.065% to 3%, (from the ETFO final proposal) and
- ignore compounding.

3%/3%/3%/3% gives yearly earnings of \$1030, \$1060, \$1090, and \$1120 for a **total of \$4300** over 4 years.

3%/4%/3%/0% gives yearly earnings of \$1030, \$1070, \$1100, \$1100 for a **total of \$4300** over 4 years.

These phantom "savings" were then supposed to "fund" thirty more minutes of preparation time per teacher beginning in 2011-12 at an unfunded cost to Boards of \$106 million over 4 years and a further unfunded cost to Boards of \$190 million per year beginning in 2012-13.

In addition, on the afternoon of the last day of the talks, ETFO proposed completely uncosted new contract improvements which OPSBA, in turn, costed Province-wide at \$273 million over 4 years.

The bottom line would have been an unmanageable financial burden for school boards. The ETFO proposal would also create an unacceptable erosion of the ability of school leaders to do what is right for students. Clearly we could not accept that proposal on behalf of all public boards. Yet this is not the message ETFO is sharing.

We should also explain that, consistent with directions received from OPSBA and CODE in late 2007, we advanced on your behalf proposals which would have confirmed the responsibility of teachers to attend regular staff meetings, to participate in Board-directed professional development and to be present in their classrooms to supervise and assist students before the commencement of classes.

We advanced proposals giving principals the ability to control reasonable amounts of the new preparation time minutes for the purposes of such things as IPRC meetings, meetings with parents, PLC's etc. and not repay missed preparation time unless it was the result of an assignment to replace an absent colleague. We should not be shy to acknowledge and defend these proposals. They are perfectly legitimate expectations of teachers which in most cases are designed simply to acknowledge existing provisions in the *Education Act*.

As public school boards, we all share the frustration, anger and disappointment that the PDT process with ETFO has reached this point. We all wanted a settlement to preserve labour peace and allow for progress with the student success agenda. The position of ETFO has placed local boards in an extremely difficult position—and we understand that.

Now boards need to negotiate within the provincial framework of two per cent over two years. No matter what is said by ETFO, Boards will not have the funding to exceed two percent per year provided by the Ministry without going into deficit.

We need to stand together and weather what is very unknown territory while some of the rhetoric sorts itself out into positive action.

We need to remain united in our commitment to reach fair, negotiated local settlements within the funding provided by the province.

Sincerely,

Bob Williams
Labour Relations Director

Board Chairs and Officials will meet on January 7, 2009 and there will be ample opportunity to talk through ideas and options, and to answer questions and address concerns. In the meantime, if there is anything else we can do to support your local work, please let us know.

BACKGROUND

ETFO's Compensation "Shell Game"

In its public communications, ETFO has attempted to characterize its Offer as foregoing a 3% salary increase in the fourth year of the agreement in order to improve working conditions and save jobs for teachers. ETFO claims the lower salary would have enabled boards to hire 1,500 new teachers and would have provided substantial benefits for elementary education in Ontario.

In fact, however, the salary increases proposed by ETFO were not lower over the 4 year term of the Agreement than the annual 3% increases offered by the government. ETFO was playing a shell game and was trying to get an increase in preparation time without any real reduction in salary dollars.

Let us look at an example of the salary dollars that would have been paid over the 4 years of the agreement to a typical elementary school teacher who was being paid at A4 maximum in 2007-08. Although this will vary somewhat by board, a teacher at A4 max would typically have been paid about \$84,000 in 2007-08. With the Ministry proposed salary increases of 3% in each of the 4 years, that teacher would have been paid \$361,967 over the 4 years. With ETFO's salary proposal, including 0% in the fourth year, that teacher would have been paid \$361,938 over the 4 years even with 0% increase in the last year (see table below). With virtually no difference in "in pocket" salaries, ETFO was asking for more minutes of preparation time per week per teacher compared to the government's offer. This would have resulted in a shortfall in funding for OPSBA boards of \$106 million over the 4 years.

School Year	Gov't Proposal		ETFO Proposal	
	%	A4 Max	%	A4 Max
2007-08		\$84,000		\$84,000
2008-09	3.00%	\$86,520	3.000%	\$86,520
2009-10	3.00%	\$89,116	3.985%	\$89,968
2010-11	3.00%	\$91,789	3.065%	\$92,725
2011-12	3.00%	\$94,543	0.000%	\$92,725
		<u>\$361,967</u>		<u>\$361,938</u>

Undoubtedly, ETFO also fully expected that they would get the salary increase that they purported to sacrifice. ETFO would place Boards under great pressure to re-establish the salary grid parity which currently exists between elementary and secondary teachers while retaining their 270 minutes per week of preparation time.