



## Who We Are

OSSTF/FEESO is a certified trade union representing more than 60,000 educational workers in 155 Bargaining Units across Ontario. Education is our specialty. Founded in 1919, OSSTF/FEESO was the first educational union in Canada to unite the collective strength of all educational workers.

## What We Do

OSSTF/FEESO is a strong independent union that uses its knowledge and power to balance both the protective and professional concerns of its membership. Our sole focus is the education sector. We understand your goals, concerns and the unique skills you bring as members of the education team.

Our primary role is to negotiate and maintain collective agreements for our members and ensure issues such as salary and benefits, retirement entitlements, working conditions, privatization, professional development and health and safety receive the attention they deserve.

## Our Members

Our diverse English and French membership work in elementary and secondary school workplaces, independent schools and consortia that offer support services to school boards and in universities. Our members include attendance counselors, continuing education teachers and instructors, educational assistants, early childhood educators, office and clerical personnel, plant support personnel, social workers, speech-language pathologists, psychologists, teachers and occasional teachers, technicians, university support staff, and many other education professionals.



OSSTF/FEESO is a democratic union that provides you with the opportunity to be a part of the decision-making process. Our internal structure reflects our diverse membership and encourages the participation of our members at the local level through to committees, council and the annual assembly.

Strong local autonomy is the hallmark of the Federation. All Bargaining Units and Districts have their own constitution and bylaws and an executive elected by their peers.

## **Provincial Structures and Support**

The elected Provincial Executive composed of seven members are supported by professional and experienced staff at the provincial office located in Toronto.

## **Provincial Committees**

As a representative of your Bargaining Unit, you can participate in standing committees that provide input from the grass roots, identify local concerns and provide advice to the union.

## **Provincial Council**

All Bargaining Units are represented at Provincial Council. This legislative body acts on behalf of the Federation between annual meetings and is able to give advice and feedback and to relay the concerns of the local membership to the Provincial Executive. It also provides a forum for debating key issues.

## **Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA)**

The Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA) is the supreme decision-making body of the union. Composed of local representatives elected by the province's Districts and Bargaining Units, AMPA has the authority to set the union's priorities, amend and approve the budget, determine union policy and establish action plans.

OSSTF/FEESO specializes in bargaining for the education sector. That's all we do. That allows us to take a very focused approach to bargaining.

- \* OSSTF/FEESO is recognized as one of the most vigorous advocates for educational workers
- \* Proven leadership in collective bargaining
- \* Negotiations are conducted by a local team you choose
- \* Your issues get the attention they deserve
- \* You have access to research, resources and a seasoned OSSTF/FEESO negotiator
- \* \$102 million strike fund
- \* Decision to strike made by members through secret ballot vote

## Financial Strength

- \* Annual operating budget of more than \$67 million
- \* \$102 million strike fund
- \* \$55 a day strike support plus benefits and pensions from day 1
- \* \$65 a day from day 11—one of the most generous in the country
- \* Other funds also complement strike pay
- \* Base dues are 1.3% plus a temporary .3% levy for a total of 1.6% and all dues are tax deductible
- \* Provincial dues can only be increased or decreased by vote of elected representatives at the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA)

We have the resources to back up your contract demands and ensure your collective agreement is followed. Even though more than 97% of collective agreements are settled without strikes, it is good to know that if a settlement cannot be reached, OSSTF/FEESO has the resources to back its members when needed.

OSSTF/FEESO is organized into three divisions that are responsible for many of the services we offer.

## The Protective Services Division

### **Negotiations and Contract Maintenance and Member Protection Departments**

- \* Assists members in all aspects of negotiating and maintaining agreements and pay equity
- \* Provides training on health & safety, negotiations, grievance and arbitrations and education finance
- \* Assists on employment insurance, pensions, benefits, LTD and WSIB issues
- \* Manages Benevolent Funds (for members in financial distress)

## The Professional Services Division

### **Educational Services Department**

- \* Provides professional support for all members working with the various professional colleges, liaising with Ministry of Education, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and various other agencies and educational institutions
- \* Organizes professional development and training on issues of importance to members
- \* Administers scholarships, bursaries for members and member's child

### **Communications/Political Action Department is responsible for:**

- \* Communications internal and external—Public relations and media relations
- \* Legislative research and lobbying
- \* Political action and submissions to the government
- \* Providing workshops and publishing regular newsletter, a periodical, brochures on current issues

## Operational Services Division

- \* Accounting Department
- \* Information Technology Services
- \* Research Library, Information, Archives and Records Management
- \* Production and Supplies Department
- \* Certification Department

**When a group of employees expresses interest in exploring the benefits of joining a union, OSSTF/FEESO will organize information meetings for all affected employees. We will answer your questions, provide data and pertinent documents to help you make an informed decision on joining OSSTF/FEESO. If we believe the majority of your colleagues wishes to join our union, we can begin a *card signing campaign*. The process is outlined below.**

## 1 \* Sign Membership Cards

A signed card indicates your desire to secure bargaining rights through OSSTF/FEESO and protect your future working relationship. By law, your decision to join the union is strictly confidential. The employer is never told who signed a card nor do they ever know how you voted individually.

## 2 \* Apply for Certification

When at least 40% of your co-workers agree to join OSSTF/FEESO by signing cards, an application is sent to the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) requesting certification.

**Employer Response:** Your employer has two days to respond to the application and must submit to the OLRB a current list of all affected employees proposed in the Bargaining Unit.

## 3 \* Secret Ballot Vote

The OLRB will order and conduct a secret ballot vote usually within five working days from the date of the application by OSSTF/FEESO.

**Where to Vote:** The OLRB notifies the employer and the union of the voting locations. The employer must post the OLRB notices at all work locations where affected employees can readily access the notices. OLRB votes are held at workplaces during work hours. The employer is required to give the employees the required amount of time to cast their ballot.

## 4 \* Become Certified as an OSSTF/FEESO Bargaining Unit

To be certified as OSSTF/FEESO members in your workplace, you need a majority of eligible voters (50% + 1) **to choose** that option at the voting polls.

**When 50% plus 1 of those who cast their ballot vote in favour of becoming members of OSSTF/FEESO, we immediately begin working on your behalf.**

**TAKE THE FIRST STEP IN JOINING WITH OSSTF/FEESO  
SIGN AND RETURN YOUR CARD TODAY**

## Why Have a Union?

- \* Under the *Ontario Labour Relations Act* (OLRA) your employer is obligated to negotiate a **legally binding** Collective Agreement with the Union.
- \* A Collective Agreement protects employees from arbitrary changes and decisions in the workplace, enforceable through a “grievance procedure” and “just cause” language.
- \* A Collective Agreement contains vital information on **wages, pension, benefits, procedures for posting of jobs, transfers, seniority, filling of vacancies, vacations, leaves and general working terms and conditions.**

## Without a Union

- \* There is no legally recognized collective agreement between you and your employer.
- \* The employer decides on all working terms and conditions, including benefits and salaries subject to applicable laws.
- \* You don't have access to a fair dispute resolution mechanism to resolve legitimate complaints when the final decision rests with the employer.

## With OSSTF/FEESO:

- \* You have **leverage** to improve your ability to bargain fair salaries, benefits and general working conditions. You don't have to go it alone.
- \* You have access to ongoing support, **expert advice and to specialists who understand the work you do.**
- \* You have access to **resources, including legal assistance, to defend your rights.**

### What Our Services Cost

**Base dues are 1.3% plus a temporary .3% levy for a total of 1.6%. All union dues are tax deductible.**

- Dues go directly to the provincial office and on average 40% of the dues paid are returned either directly or indirectly to your Bargaining Unit to conduct your local day-to-day business.
- The provincial office pays for everything else—workshops and conferences (including travelling expenses and accommodations), professional development, negotiations, grievances/arbitration, legal expenses and strike pay.
- Provincial dues can only be increased or decreased by a vote of elected representative at AMPA.

***You do not begin to pay OSSTF/FEESO dues until your first collective agreement is signed. Dues are not retroactive. You receive all services available to all members even though you pay no dues until an agreement is reached.***

### Your Right To Join A Union

- Every person is free to join a trade union of the person's own choice and to participate in its lawful activities. *OLRA s.5*
- Your right to join a union must be respected and not interfered with by persons, unions or employers. *OLRA s.76*
- Your terms and conditions of work are NOT jeopardized by this process. *OLRA s.86*
- Signing a card does not make you a member of the union. It indicates your desire to be a member and for a secret ballot vote to be scheduled.
- The Ontario Labour Relations Board will decide which managerial and confidential positions are not included in a union.
- Your employer will not have access to the cards nor can they ask you whether you or anyone else signed a card.
- The employer cannot ask about union sponsored meetings or activities.
- The employer cannot call you into an office to talk about the union unless you ask for the meeting.

# STRONGER TOGETHER

You can take the first step toward achieving your goals right now. Complete and sign the enclosed OSSTF/FEESO membership card and return it in the envelope provided. Indicate the date you signed it and place your signature on the appropriate line. The witness can be anyone over the age of 18 including a co-worker or family member.