



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **ETFO and OSSTF/FEESO argue for fair Bill 124 remedy in front of arbitrator**

TORONTO, ON — Today, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO), along with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), stood before an arbitrator to argue for a fair remedy to the Ford government's unconstitutional Bill 124.

"It's been a day long coming," stated OSSTF/FEESO President Karen Littlewood. "Our members have been waiting four long years to reclaim wages stolen by the Ford government under the unlawful Bill 124. Today, we had the opportunity to go before a neutral arbitrator to present our arguments for what would constitute a fair remedy for our members. Every public sector worker, including all teachers and education workers as well as the students, parents, and communities they serve have been negatively impacted by this disastrous legislation. It's time to finally put an end to this unjust bill."

Added ETFO President Karen Brown, "A fair remedy for our members is necessary to address the historic and continuing erosion of real wages due to inflation. In addition, comparability, recruitment and retention challenges, and the economic climate in Ontario at the time and now are relevant factors in determining a remedy. The province is in a strong fiscal position. The province must stop filling its coffers while emptying the pockets of ETFO members and stripping public education of much-needed learning and working supports."

Last year, OSSTF/FEESO's education worker and teacher members voted to approve a proposal guaranteeing that members will receive a financial remedy for wages lost under Bill 124. The ruinous bill unfairly capped public sector wage increases to one per cent per year for the 2019-2022 education union contracts.

Late last year, ETFO's teachers, occasional teachers, and education worker members ratified four-year deals with the provincial government that included a similar agreement to refer the Bill 124 wage remedy to binding arbitration.

Bill 124 was in effect for the unions' collective agreements from 2019-2022. The parties resolved compensation for years one and two of the wage-freeze period during central bargaining; only the third year (2021-2022) was referred to arbitration.

ETFO and OSSTF/FEESO presented evidence and arguments today in support of a fair remedy for members who had their wages unconstitutionally suppressed by the Ford government. Such a remedy will help address both the serious recruitment and retention issues in education as well as the significant erosion of members' wages due to persistent high inflation.

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“OSSTF/FEESO and its membership have been unified with the labour movement in the fight against this government’s heavy-handed attempts to undermine labour negotiations and deny workers their fair wage, and I am encouraged to be joined by ETFO and their members today in this fight for a fair remedy,” said Littlewood. “Bill 124 was always unlawful, and Justice Koehnen agreed. Workers deserve far better than a government that repeatedly undermines their rights and livelihoods. Let today serve as a signal to all future governments that workers will not stand for this kind of injustice.”

Noted Brown, “Today, with the strength and solidarity of our members behind us, ETFO worked alongside OSSTF/FEESO to challenge Bill 124. ETFO has denounced this bill since its unconstitutional inception, and has challenged the Ford government’s interference and overreach. After presenting our arguments, we are confident that a fair and just remedy will be delivered by the board of arbitration in the coming weeks. The Conservatives’ decision to infringe upon union members’ Charter rights was an attack on workers, and it must never be repeated.”

*[OSSTF/FEESO](#), founded in 1919, has over 60,000 members across Ontario. They include public high school teachers, occasional teachers, educational assistants, continuing education teachers and instructors, early childhood educators, psychologists, secretaries, speech-language pathologists, social workers, plant support personnel, university support staff, and many others in education.*

*[ETFO](#) represents approximately 83,000 members, including public elementary teachers, occasional teachers, designated early childhood educators, education support personnel, and professional support personnel. Information about ETFO collective bargaining is at [etfocb.ca](#).*

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