

MEDIA RELEASE

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OSSTF/FEESO to hold a membership vote on a process to resolve bargaining with the Ford government

TORONTO, ON – At a special meeting today, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) Bargaining Unit Presidents and Chief Negotiators voted overwhelmingly to recommend that Members enter into a proposal to resolve bargaining with the Ontario government through a process that could include binding interest arbitration. The proposal is not a tentative agreement but establishes a clear pathway forward for this round of bargaining.

The union will now begin preparations for an internal membership vote that will take place through September. Approximately 60,000 education workers and secondary school teachers from across the province will have the opportunity to vote on whether they want to enter into the proposal.

"Today represents a critical point in this round of bargaining," said OSSTF/FEESO President Karen Littlewood. "Since beginning bargaining 13 months ago, OSSTF/FEESO has been fighting to improve the learning and working conditions in Ontario's schools but the Ford government and school boards have refused to be a fair partner in these negotiations. This process is not a tentative agreement but it does promise to break any impasse by bringing in a third party arbitrator to seek a fair and just resolution."

If OSSTF/FEESO Members vote in favour of the proposal to resolve bargaining, central bargaining will continue until October 27th, by which date any matters that have not yet been settled will go to arbitration. If the Membership votes no, the proposal will be dropped and bargaining will continue.

President Littlewood added, "As a democratic organization, it's critical that we allow Members to have the final say through a vote on whether OSSTF/FEESO should enter into this proposal. Bargaining will continue centrally and locally throughout the voting process."

If accepted, the proposal provides there will be no strikes or lockouts during this round of bargaining between the government and OSSTF/FEESO as any items that cannot be agreed to at the central and local bargaining tables will be sent to arbitration.

The proposal also guarantees that OSSTF/FEESO Members will receive a remedy for wages lost under Bill 124, the Ford government's wage suppression legislation that unfairly targeted woman-dominated public sector workers. Members will receive the remedy without having to wait for the courts to decide on the constitutionality of Bill 124.

“It is a comprehensive proposal for our membership to vote on as it includes a pathway to a Bill 124 remedy in addition to moving bargaining forward after 13 months of avoidance from the Ford government. It will also mean that we, as dedicated education professionals, will be able to continue to deliver stability for students in Ontario while seeking the best possible deal for the OSSTF/FEESO membership,” concluded President Littlewood.

OSSTF/FEESO leadership will share further details once the vote is complete.

Key Facts:

- OSSTF/FEESO leadership has voted to recommend a proposal to resolve bargaining through a process that could involve binding interest arbitration.
- The proposal also includes a remedy for wages that were unfairly lost under Bill 124.
- The proposal is not a tentative agreement. A deal has not been reached.
- OSSTF/FEESO Members will now vote on whether to enter into the proposal. This voting process will conclude at the end of September.
- If the proposal passes, there will be no job action taken by OSSTF/FEESO and no lockouts by school boards during this round of bargaining.
- This proposal represents a significant pathway towards securing real investments in public education following years of chronic underfunding and underspending by the Ford government.
- Research by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has shown that school funding through the annual Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) has fallen by \$1,200 per student when adjusted for inflation since the Ford government took power in 2018.
- Years of suppressed wages and deteriorating learning and working conditions has led to serious staffing and retention issues. School boards across the province are struggling to find qualified people to fill education worker and teacher positions.
- Without a fair collective agreement for education workers and teachers, school boards will be forced to continue to make cuts to the supports and programs that students in Ontario rely on.
- The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario has reported that there will be an education spending shortfall in the billions of dollars if current spending levels continue.

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.

Contact: Caitlin Reid
Media and Communications Advisor
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
Caitlin.Reid@osstf.ca
416-576-8346

