



Thank you speaker. I tried to keep my address relatively brief this year but I'm going to take a few minutes to augment my address, which I recorded on Monday morning. I mentioned, early in my recorded remarks, the demonstrations occurring now around the world, catalyzed by the brutal killing of George Floyd, but actually caused by hundreds of years of anti-black racism and oppression. I certainly hope OSSTF/FEESO's position was made clear in the statement we issued on June 1st and subsequently also sent out as a memo to all leaders and members. I recognize that, given my identity, I am not the ideal spokesperson for equity issues, within the Federation or anywhere, for that matter. I recognize that I speak from a variety of positions of privilege that mean I may empathize with but have not experienced what racialized members, for example, have experienced. But one of my privileges is to speak on behalf of the Federation and that is more than just a privilege, it is also a duty

In these times, no one and no institution can afford to stay quiet. As we acknowledged in our June 1st statement, "The outrage, fear and pain that many in the Black community are experiencing because you do not feel safe, is clear. As an education and labour community, we must stand together and speak up when people are facing violence and discrimination because of their skin colour." Silent support will not be felt as support and members, all members, but in this case explicitly black members, deserve to know that their union is with them. But statements also need actions.

Yesterday at Provincial Council, District 12 Toronto brought 3 motions that I want to bring to your attention. I thank D12 and Leslie Wolfe for working through potential procedural hurdles with Provincial office so that these could be approved. These motions were too important to be caught up in procedures. And I thank Danica, Michelle, and Kimberly who moved and spoke to these motions. And while PE had begun considering motions that we might want to bring forward, and while I was conferring with our equity officer, it was brought to my attention that D12 had motions ready to go. I commend them for their quick response. I believe, and clearly Provincial Council massively agreed as well, these motions are positive and constructive. The motions will create 2 workshops: one on being a good ally, and another on anti-black racism. We already have a racial justice and other equity workshops. I'm pleased we will now also have these because I expect they will bring important approaches and insights to the broader issue of racial justice. A third motion will have OSSTF/FEESO make a \$10,000 donation to Black Lives Matter.

I want to situate my support for these new actions within the equity work that OSSTF/FEESO has already been doing. Since I was first assigned to the earliest version of the equity work group 13 years ago, I have believed and OSSTF/FEESO has believed that not only must we have policies and programs in place that promote equity, we must ensure the membership knows about them. We must acknowledge that groups of members have been marginalized and we must name the causes of marginalization. And then we must, together, seek to address them. We must explicitly welcome into the work of the Federation those members who come from equity seeking groups and we must recognize that equality of treatment and

equitable treatment can be very different things. That is why we have an equity statement that recognizes these truths. It is why we began self-identification so we can track our progress in order to improve our programs. It is why we began an equity mentorship program. It is why we have many more equity programs. And it is why I support these new actions. Because while we have, I firmly believe, done some good work, we have not done enough. In these circumstances, the concept of “enough” doesn’t even register. We must simply fight on, together, in the pursuit of equity, in the pursuit of the racial justice that we are still so tragically far from having achieved.

We are an education union and education is critical to overcoming the injustices that are longstanding and recently so brutally manifested once again. So although the motions don’t require it, I will commit OSSTF/FEESO not just to offering but promoting this workshop. Our members must know about it and be urged to participate. And I will commit the PE to taking it and similar workshops, just as we took another equity workshop, along with our professional staff, at a recent fall planning retreat.

The road to equity is long. OSSTF/FEESO has taken some steps along the way but there is so much further to go in this journey. Let’s take it together.