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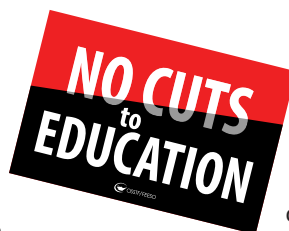
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Delivering a message



In early February, OSSTF/FEESO members all over the province will be delivering a strong, clear message to both government and opposition MPPs that cuts to the province's education budget would have a tangible negative impact on Ontario's students, and could undermine the future prosperity of the province.

Local OSSTF/FEESO leaders are arranging to meet with MPPs in ridings covered by their Districts, and frontline education workers will be holding information rallies at those MPPs' constituency offices. The goal will be to impress upon both the politicians and the public that proper funding levels for the public education system and the students it serves should always be seen as a solid investment in the future of our communities. Cuts to education funding, on the other hand, would serve only to damage the learning environment for our current students and undermine their success, both now and in their futures.

The information rallies and the MPP meetings are being organized, in part, to encourage Premier Ford to keep his promise to not cut the jobs of frontline workers. We are open to the possibility that some administrative "efficiencies" could be found within the system, but we are very concerned with cuts that directly diminish frontline services. Staffing reduc-

tions would have an immediate negative impact on student learning, particularly for students with special needs, and would exacerbate the problems that have arisen over the past several years with violence in our workplaces. Classrooms that are both safe and inclusive cannot be maintained without the necessary supports in place, including those supports provided by staff such as early childhood educators, educational assistants, psychologists, social workers and others.

In addition to supports for classrooms, appropriate class size is of vital importance for student achievement. While individual class size maxima are determined locally for public secondary schools, overall classroom teaching staff generation is accomplished through a provincially established requirement to maintain an aggregated board-wide average of no more than 22 students for one teacher. Any increase to this ratio would lead to a reduction in the number of teachers and deliver a crippling blow to programming. As a result, students would have fewer options for courses.

The majority of the rallies and meetings with MPPs will take place on February 7, although some may be scheduled for other dates in February in the event of calendar conflicts. The timing is to ensure that the message OSSTF/FEESO members want to deliver reaches the ears of MPPs—especially government MPPs—before the provincial budget is drafted. It is not yet known precisely when the budget will be presented at Queen's Park, but the expectation is that it will be sometime between late March and late April. 🌐

Livrer un message

Au début février, les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO de partout dans la province livreront un message fort et précis tant aux députés du gouvernement qu'à ceux de l'opposition. Ce message : toute coupure au budget de la province en matière d'éducation aurait des conséquences concrètes néfastes pour les élèves de l'Ontario et pourrait compromettre la prospérité future de la province.

Les dirigeants locaux d'OSSTF/FEESO s'organisent pour rencontrer les députés provinciaux dans les circonscriptions desservies par leurs districts et les travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation de première ligne tiendront des rassemblements informatifs

à ces bureaux de circonscription. L'objectif sera de bien faire comprendre aux politiciens et au public que des niveaux adéquats de financement pour le système d'éducation publique et les élèves qu'il dessert devraient toujours être vus comme un bon investissement dans l'avenir de nos communautés. Par contre, les coupures au financement de l'éducation ne feraient que nuire au milieu d'apprentissage de nos élèves actuels et compromettre leur réussite dans l'immédiat et pour leur avenir.

Les rassemblements informatifs et les rencontres avec les députés provinciaux sont organisés en partie pour inciter le gouvernement Ford à tenir sa promesse de ne pas supprimer les emplois des travailleuses et travailleurs de première ligne. Nous sommes ouverts à la possibilité que certaines « efficiences » admi-

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nistratives puissent être trouvées au sein du système, mais nous sommes très inquiets des coupures qui réduiraient directement les services de première ligne. Les réductions de personnel pourraient avoir des effets défavorables immédiats sur l'apprentissage des élèves, surtout pour les élèves ayant des besoins particuliers et aggraverait les problèmes qui se posent depuis plusieurs années à l'égard de la violence dans nos milieux de travail. Les salles de classe qui sont à la fois sécuritaires et inclusives ne pourraient pas être maintenues sans le soutien nécessaire en place, y compris le soutien offert par le personnel comme les éducatrices et éducateurs de la petite enfance, les éducateurs et aides à l'enseignement, les psychologues, les travailleurs sociaux, entre autres.

En plus du soutien pour les salles de classe, un effectif de classe approprié revêt une importance cruciale pour la réussite des élèves. Tandis que l'effectif maximal d'une classe individuelle est déterminé au niveau local pour les écoles secondaires publiques, la génération dans son ensemble du personnel enseignant en classe est réalisée par une exigence établie par la province de maintenir une moyenne pour l'ensemble du conseil scolaire d'au plus 22 élèves pour un enseignant. Toute augmentation à ce ratio entraînerait une diminution du nombre d'enseignants et porterait un coup paralysant à la programmation. Par conséquent,

les élèves auraient moins d'options de cours.

La majorité de ces rassemblements et rencontres avec les députés provinciaux se tiendront le 7 février, même si quelques-uns peuvent être prévus à d'autres dates en février en cas de conflit d'horaire. Le moment choisi veille à ce que le message que les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO veulent diffuser soit entendu par les députés provinciaux, en particulier ceux du gouvernement, avant l'élaboration du budget provincial. On ne sait pas encore avec précision à quel moment le budget sera présenté à Queen's Park, mais on s'attend à ce que ce soit entre la fin mars et la fin avril. 🌐

QUEEN'S PARK NOTES



Potential Power Workers' strike preempted by legislation

Less than two weeks after MPPs recessed for their winter break on December 6, the Doug Ford Progressive Conservative government recalled the Legislature to deal with a potential strike by the Power Workers' Union. Negotiations between the Power Workers' Union and Ontario Power Generation (OPG) had broken down after the union had rejected management's latest offer. The union issued a 21-day strike notice on December 14, which meant strike action could have commenced on January 4, 2019.

When the Legislature resumed sitting, Ford's Minister of Labour, Laurie Scott, introduced Bill 67, the *Labour Relations Amendment Act (Protecting Ontario's Power Supply)*. The purpose of the bill was to prevent any potential strike by Ontario's Power Workers' Union. In addition, it would block any lockout of the union by OPG. The legislation also outlined a process of binding arbitration that both parties would be compelled to follow. The legislation did not go so far, however, as to declare the Power Workers' an essential service.

In proposing the legislation, Scott and Energy Minister Greg Rickford said, "We understand constitutional rights, but we're here to talk about lights."

In contrast, NDP leader Andrea Horwath accused the PCs of trampling on workers' rights. Despite the NDP's opposition to the bill, the PCs were able to pass the legislation by the end of the week, ensuring that no strike or lockout would happen.

With this legislation, and with the unusual step of recalling the Legislature during the winter break, the Ford government has clearly signalled that it will not hesitate to intervene in any contract negotiation that involves the public or broader public service. 🌐



Scents and sensibility

Statistics Canada estimates that 2.4 per cent of the work force have chemical sensitivities that cause physical reactions, many of them serious enough to affect their ability at work. Also, at least 15 per cent of the population is estimated to have lesser reactions to fragrances, such as asthma and headaches, which also affects their ability to work.

Exposure to fragrances and scented products can trigger serious health reactions in individuals with asthma, allergies, migraines, or chemical sensitivities. Fragrances and scents are found in a wide range of products including perfume, aftershave, deodorant, soap air fresheners, fabric softeners, laundry detergents, facial tissues, and candles.

It is a personal choice to use fragrances or scents; however, it is important to recognize that the chemicals from which these are created become airborne. The chemicals vaporize into the air and are easily inhaled by those around us. Today's fragrances and scented products are made up of a complex mixture of thousands of toxic chemicals which can contribute to poor indoor air quality and serious health problems.

What can you do to help?

- Be considerate of those who are sensitive to fragrances and scents.
- Avoid using scented products in the workplace.
- If you must use a fragrance or scented product, please use it very sparingly. A general guideline for fragrances and scented products is that they should not be detectable more than an arm's length away.
- Avoid using products such as air fresheners or diffusers in your work area.

/Andrea Murik is a teacher in District 23, Grand Erie and is a member of the Health and Safety/Workplace Safety and Insurance Act Committee. 🌐



Update

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Sleight of hand

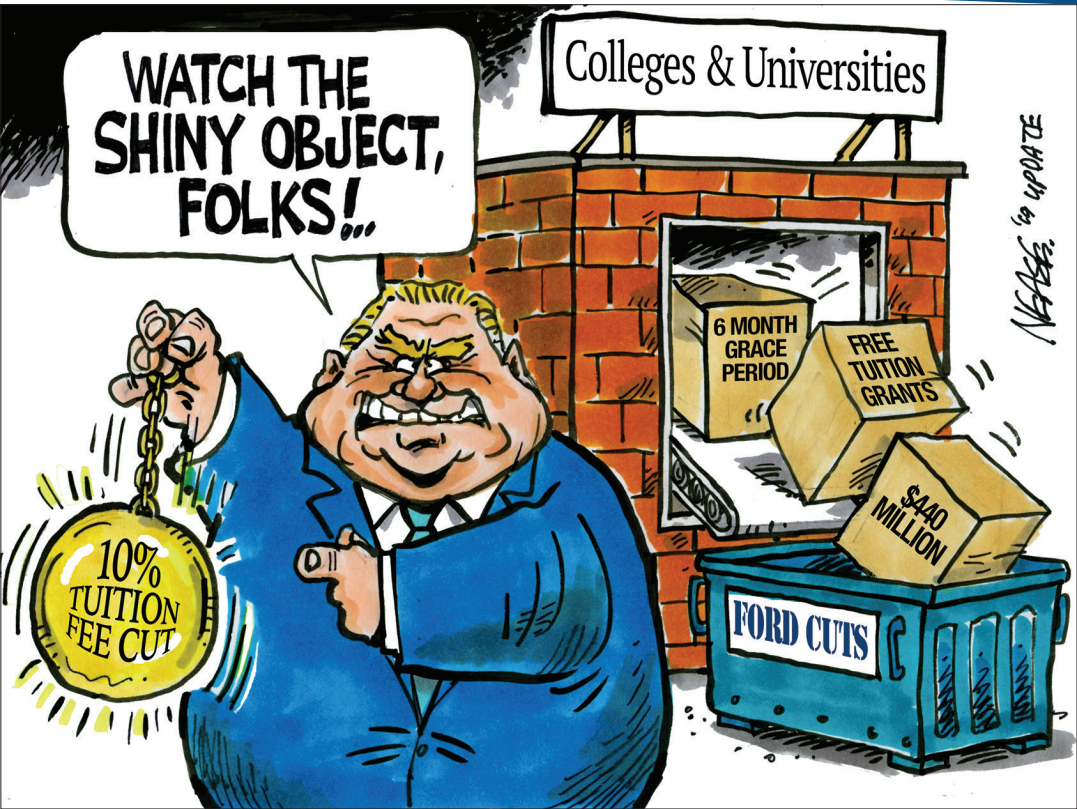
A media release distributed by the provincial government on January 17 proudly proclaimed that Ontario was about to “lower student tuition burden by 10 per cent.” The release went on to say that the tuition cuts were another step in “the Ford Government’s plan to keep more money in the pockets of Ontario students and families.”

Marrilee Fullerton, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, was undoubtedly hoping that Ontarians would take those claims at face value and not think too deeply about the other measures she was announcing that morning.

What wasn’t highlighted in the media release was that the Ford government is also scrapping the free tuition program for low income families, which was introduced by the previous Liberal government. That program will be replaced with a revamped system of grants and loans, and the end result will be precisely the opposite of “more money in the pockets of Ontario students.” Grants will be more difficult to access than under the previous system and, for most students, any savings realized by the 10 per cent tuition reduction will be wiped out many times over by the extra debt they’ll be carrying when they graduate. And even then they won’t be able to take advantage of the six-month interest-free grace period, because the government is eliminating that, too.

The Minister also announced that students would now be able to opt out of certain fees—fees that, in almost all cases, would have been approved through an on-campus referendum. Those fees fund student activities and services ranging from campus newspapers to student unions, and they are in place because the majority of students have indicated that those services are important to them. The government’s move to allow an opt-out from these fees is an affront to the democratic will of the students that voted to adopt them, and it’s a move that will almost certainly undermine the important work that student unions perform on behalf of, and for the benefit of, students on campuses all over Ontario.

For OSSTF/FEESO District 35 members employed in the university sector, the most immediate threat resides in the fact that the government has no plans to replace the revenue lost to institutions by virtue of the 10 per cent tuition reduction. Ontario already ranks dead last in Canada in per-student funding for universities, and this move by the government will only exacerbate that problem by removing hundreds of millions of dollars from the province’s post-secondary system. That funding shortfall cannot help but negatively impact the crucial frontline services that OSSTF/FEESO members provide to students on the campuses where they work.



The government devised these changes in the absence of any consultation with students, frontline workers or university administrators. If they had bothered to consult, they

would have heard that any reduction in tuition fees needs to be accompanied by enhanced, stable funding for programs and services at Ontario’s universities.

February is Black History Month

Every February OSSTF/FEESO members are invited to organize and participate in Black History Month events to celebrate the important contributions and legacy of Black Canadians. First recognized in Canada in 1995, Black History Month is also observed in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, and the Netherlands.

The value of recognizing, celebrating, and honouring the experiences of Black Canadians is an important part of the continued work of this Federation and of the larger labour movement.

The work of unions and labour organizations throughout history has helped advance equity laws, challenge bias, and encourage diversity in the workplace. By acknowledging our national history and the legacy of Black Canadians, we can continue to develop our own understanding and challenge racism. This will also help us, as educators,

continue to foster empowerment and leadership in black youth.

Local leaders and members are encouraged to seek out ways of acknowledging Black History Month in their work sites. The website www.blackhistorysociety.ca offers a variety of resources to education workers seeking to celebrate Black History Month, including information on events, workshops, and classroom activities. Also, OSSTF/FEESO’s Human Rights Committee has commissioned an image for use by Districts and Bargaining Units to assist in this celebration.

The OSSTF/FEESO Black History Month image, in a variety of digital formats, is available for viewing and download at: showcase.dropbox.com/s/Black-History-Month-qCnkk041kLP60b99su8cl.



2019/2020 Provincial standing committees and councils applications

Applications are now open to all members of OSSTF/FEESO for appointments to provincial standing committees and councils. Any member in good standing is encouraged to apply for one of our many provincial committees and councils for term and cooption positions.

Vacancies are available on the following committees and councils:


- Certification Council/Certification Appeal Board
- Comité des service en langue française
- Communications/Political Action Committee
- Educational Services Committee
- Finance Committee
- Health & Safety/Workplace Safety Insurance Act Committee
- Human Rights Committee
- Parliamentary and Constitution Council
- Protective Services Committee
- Status of Women Committee

To review information about provincial committees and councils, including tips for applicants,

statements of committee needs and other procedural information, go to the OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Council page.

The application form is available online and requires members to login in to the Registered User section of the website. The online form will migrate your member information from our database automatically.

If you have not yet confirmed your account on our website, you will be prompted to do so by using your email address. If you have any issues with confirming your account, please contact Membership Database at Provincial Office (416-751-8300 or 1-800-267-7867). If you encounter any issues with the online application form, please send an email to webhelp@osstf.ca.

The deadline for on-time applications is March 1. 

Welcome to *Update express*

As we continue to transition *Update* to an always-current online publication, we will occasionally publish an abbreviated print edition, *Update express*, featuring a few key OSSTF/FEESO news items. For more—and sometimes more current—Federation news, we encourage you to visit *Update* online at www.osstfupdate.ca.



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