

## Next Steps in the Bargaining Process

Thirteen months ago, OSSTF/FEESO began bargaining at both the Education Worker and Teacher/Occasional Teacher central tables. To date, the management team comprised of the Ontario government and trustee association representatives, have shown little interest in engaging in substantive negotiations over the actual working and learning conditions in Ontario's schools and consequently, very little progress has been made at either central table.

As we noted in our last bulletin, staffing and retention remain a priority issue for OSSTF/FEESO, along with ensuring that students have access to the services and supports they need to achieve their potential. Numerous headlines over the summer have reported the cuts school boards are being forced to make due to the government's ongoing underfunding and underspending in public education. This refusal to invest public money in Ontario's public schools persists despite the fact that for every dollar that is invested in education, there is a return of a \$1.30 in economic benefit according to a [Conference Board of Canada report](#).

This underfunding is intentional and systemic. As repeatedly identified by the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, there will be an [education spending shortfall in the billions of dollars](#). 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.

Because of this failure to appropriately fund public education, school boards across the province are finding it increasingly difficult to properly recruit and retain education professionals and are being forced to make cuts to the supports and programs being offered to Ontario's students.

OSSTF/FEESO remains committed to securing a fair collective agreement that addresses our Members' needs, is responsive to current economic realities, and ensures students receive the best learning conditions in schools, along with getting the supports and services students need. Much might be said about the need for stability in schools in these upcoming weeks: the fact is that it is the daily contributions of OSSTF/FEESO members and other teachers and education workers across the province that provide stability to Ontario's students.

Future stability, however, requires that this government provide the resources necessary to ensure schools are staffed by qualified teachers and education workers. The Ford government continues [to starve the education system of funding](#) for the supports, programs and professionals that students need to meet their full potential. In addition, this government's approach of [implementing initiatives at the last minute](#) and ignoring the input of parents and education professionals is the opposite of stability.

It is well past time for this government to come to the table willing to conclude a deal to ensure students in Ontario can learn and grow in a world-renowned public education system. Failing this commitment from government at the bargaining table, the Provincial Executive will seek a strike mandate from the membership early this fall. A strong strike mandate will demonstrate our unity and determination to achieve fair and favourable terms for our members and students. The government needs to show their commitment to both the students of Ontario as well as to the people working in education.

Such a strike vote will be held online. Members need to ensure they can log into the Members-Only section of the Provincial Website so that they can access the online voting tool. In addition, Members should verify that their personal email address is up to date in our database so that they can receive information about provincial negotiations. There is an [article on logging into myOSSTF](#) and ensuring contact details are up to date. Additional information on accessing the Members-Only section of the website can be found on the [Member Login page](#).

General bargaining information can be found on the [Bargaining 101 page](#) and recent [media coverage](#) on the OSSTF/FEESO Update webpage.

As stated in the last Bargaining Bulletin, OSSTF/FEESO has one Education Worker bargaining date on August 17.

**The Bargaining Bulletins are now available on the *myOSSTF* section of the OSSTF/FEESO website. Please check *myOSSTF* for updates.**