



From the President

February 2019

Shawn Martin, GEETF President – smartin@geetf.ca

Say NO to Larger Class Sizes

The PC government has announced it is considering removing the cap on class sizes for Kindergarten to grade 3 as well as increasing the average class size for Junior and Intermediate grades.

Let the government know that you do not support larger classes in our schools, and that instead of cutting funding, the government should be investing in public education.

The following link takes you to a form letter that can be personalized and then emailed directly to your MPP. Tens of thousands of emails have already been sent to MPPs and to the Minister of Education.

<https://www.buildingbetterschools.ca/class>

Another option for you to express how you feel about increasing class sizes, is to answer the questions that the Ministry of Education is asking in their 'Engagement Guide'. I've included a link to that guide below. This guide provides the background on class size, guiding questions, and how to send in your responses to the Ministry.

https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Memos/B2019/B03_attach2_EN.pdf

School Visits & Steward Meetings

Your released officers are visiting schools during nutrition breaks, and small group Union Steward meetings have been arranged. We want to hear your concerns and ideas, and to answer member questions. We look forward to visiting with you.

Ministry Seeking Feedback on Changing Hiring Practices

Ontario Regulation 274/12 – Hiring Practices came into effect in September 2012. The regulation sets mandatory terms and conditions that school boards must follow when hiring long-term occasional and permanent teachers. The purpose of Reg. 274 was to bring greater transparency, fairness, consistency, and accountability to school board hiring practices of teachers. The government is seeking feedback on the following principles, "with a lens to having quality teaching in the classroom for all students: transparency, consistency, clarity, diversity & equity and reducing administrative burdens."

Clearly the government is looking at making changes to Reg. 274 that would allow boards more flexibility in hiring. ETFO's position is that independent researchers have already investigated and reported that when implemented effectively by school boards, Reg. 274 has resulted in a more consistent, transparent and fair hiring process. ETFO is opposed to a consultation process which has the appearance of conducting bargaining outside the formal collective bargaining process. Issues such as class size and hiring practices have been the subjects of collective bargaining in previous rounds and should, therefore, be bargained rather than addressed through informal discussions about education funding. The link to the government's consultation paper is:

https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Memos/B2019/B03_attach2_EN.pdf

Workplace Harassment

To quote the Grand Erie District School Board's policy on Harassment/Objectionable behaviour...the Board "is committed to providing a working and learning environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity...Every individual has the right to learn and work in an environment that is free from harassment...the Board will not tolerate harassment or objectionable behaviour..."

I quote the Board's policy because I want members to be aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding harassment. The definition of harassment is, "a course of vexatious comment or conduct which is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome".

Based on personal experiences in supporting members who have been put in the highly stressful situation of having to respond to, or feeling the need to file a harassment complaint, I recommend that if you feel that someone's behaviour toward you is unwelcome, then the first step is to verbally address this with the individual. Alleging harassment is a serious accusation. Before doing so, it's important to review the Board's definition of harassment. I also highly recommend that if you are told by another employee that your behaviour is unwelcome, then please self-reflect, clarify your intentions politely and professionally, and seek to reach a successful resolution to disputes or misunderstandings.

Schools are Closed on Inclement Weather Days

Please do not go to work on inclement weather days when the Board has closed schools. This presents a safety issue for the teacher and for the school board.

Applications due March 1 for ETFO 2019 Annual Meeting Poll Clerk or Assistant

Have you ever thought of volunteering to attend our Federation summer meeting in the role of poll clerk or assistant? This is an outstanding opportunity to get involved in our provincial organization, experience first-hand how delegates give direction to our organization, and to play an invaluable role in the successful functioning of our Annual Meeting. 2019 is also an election year which makes for a very interesting meeting! If you would like more information about specific responsibilities, accommodation in Toronto, any other questions you may have, and to obtain an application form, please contact Cory Judson at the GEETF office.

Upcoming Events

Please go to the calendar at geetf.ca for details and to register online for events.

FEB 18 – Family Day Holiday

FEB 19 – Music Workshop (held in Simcoe)

FEB 20 – Local Representative Council

FEB 21 – FSL 'Make & Take' (Ryerson Heights)

FEB 25 – Corn Husk Doll Workshop

FEB 27 – Ukulele Playing Group

MAR 1 – Status of Women 'Purse Bingo'

MAR 6 – GEETF Choir (Tentative)

MAR 8 – International Women's Day

MAR 9 – 17 March Break

MAR 20 – Surviving Core French Workshop

MAR 27 – GEETF Choir