




 Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
 Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'élémentaire de l'Ontario

A brief history of Ontario's public elementary teachers and their federations

It's Elementary



A brief history of Ontario's public elementary
teachers and their federations

It's Elementary

BARBARA RICHTER



Prepared for the
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

Design:
Artifact graphic design



Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

Suite 1000, 480 University Avenue

Toronto, Ontario

M5G 1V2

Copyright © 2008 by the Author and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

All rights reserved. No part of the publication may be stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

**A brief history of Ontario's public elementary
teachers and their federations**

It's Elementary

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

ETFO - The First Ten Years -----5

CHAPTER TWO

Early 1800s to 1944

The Beginnings of Public Education ----- 17

CHAPTER THREE

1945 to 1980

Growth of the Federations ----- 29

CHAPTER FOUR

1980 to 1998

Consolidating Gains and Fighting Back ----- 41

CHAPTER FIVE

Women and the Federations ----- 53

This is a brief history of Ontario's public elementary teachers and their federations.

We will learn about ETFO and its predecessor organizations, the challenges they faced, and the victories they achieved. We will learn that

- **Federations work steadfastly to promote and protect the interests of their members.**
- **Federations were, and continue to be, leaders in advocating for the rights of teachers and the broader society.**
- **Funding for elementary education has been an issue since the 1800s.**
- **Legal or collective agreement rights are never completely secure; the federation and its members have had to be vigilant in keeping elementary education issues in the public eye and on the government agenda.**

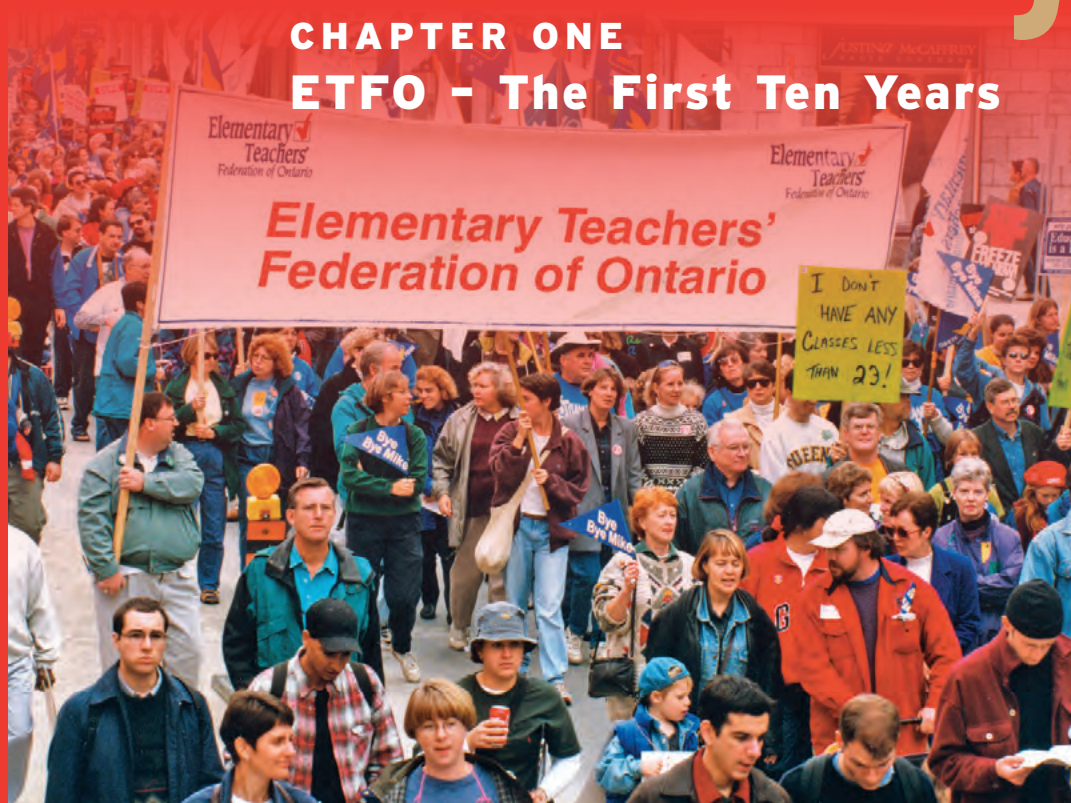
1998 - what a year to be born as a federation! It was the year of the big ice storm in Eastern Ontario and Quebec. Google was founded and Sesame Street turned 30. It was the year Swissair flight 111 crashed off Peggy's Cove in Nova Scotia. Air Canada pilots went on strike for the first time in the company's history. The Calgary Stampeders won the Grey Cup and the New York Yankees won the World Series. Bill Clinton was president of the USA. Jean Chrétien was the prime minister of Canada and Joe Clarke had been elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada again. Mike Harris was premier of Ontario. And the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) began.

A brief history of Ontario's public elementary teachers and their federations

It's Elementary

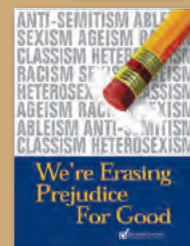
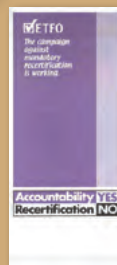
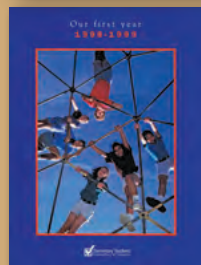
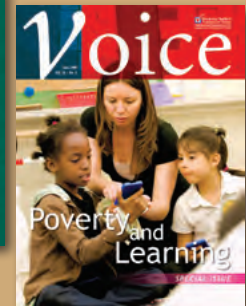
CHAPTER ONE

ETFO - The First Ten Years





This overview captures only some of ETFO's achievements during the past ten years. ETFO performs a great deal of work on behalf of members through professional relations services, equity and women's services, professional development, public relations, communications, collective bargaining, research, and leadership development. ETFO does outreach to equality-seeking groups, community, labour, and social justice groups, and international organizations.



Elementary students get \$711 less funding than high school students.
 Elementary students get \$711 less funding than high school students.
 Elementary students get \$711 less funding than high school students.
 Elementary students get \$711 less funding than high school students.
 Elementary students get \$711 less funding than high school students.

CLOSE THE \$711 FUNDING GAP NOW.
 Ontario's Elementary School Teachers closethegap.ca

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario was created by the amalgamation of two predecessor organizations, the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO) and the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation (OPSTF). When ETFO began on July 1, 1998, it continued the work these two federations had done to promote and protect the interests of public school educators for 80 years.

1998 was a time of massive change in Ontario education. The provincial government forced Ontario's 129 school boards to merge into 72, 31 of them public boards. Some of these new boards were huge, covering, in one instance, an area the size of France. New funding arrangements meant boards could no longer raise money from their local tax base.

Teachers were brought under the *Ontario Labour Relations Act*. Occasional teachers became members of teacher federations, but principals and vice-principals were removed. Thousands of veteran teachers and administrators took advantage of a new opportunity – the 85 factor – to retire early. Added to this was a new curriculum (with no resources for implementation), new report cards (with none of the technical support needed to produce them), and the threat of ongoing teacher testing.

These were not ideal conditions in which to launch a new federation but elementary teachers proved they were up to the challenge.

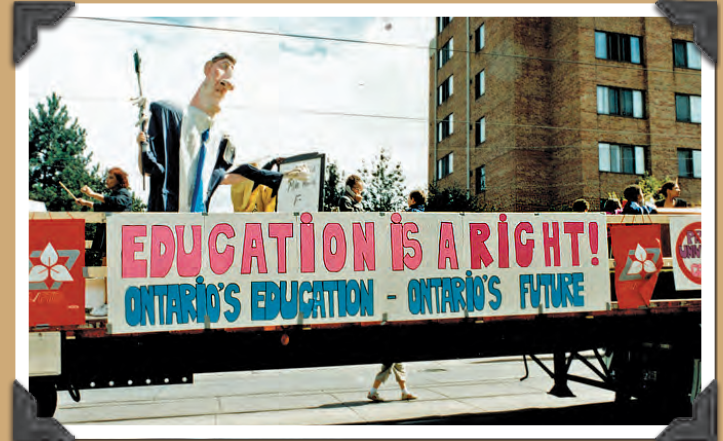
The critical first year...

A hectic year of activity followed ETFO's inaugural Annual Meeting in 1998.

In collective bargaining the federation and the newly configured school boards had to reconcile old agreements – sometimes six or more agreements had to become one. Many of the benefits teachers enjoyed were removed from the *Education Act* and had to be renegotiated. School boards, crying poverty in the face of the new funding formula, were eager to strip hard-won clauses on working conditions, staffing, and benefits. Their idea of reconciling salary grids was moving to the lowest wage.

It took tough bargaining, determined members, more than 20 takeovers, and three strikes (including one lockout), but ETFO locals prevailed. Salaries were reconciled up and working

It took tough bargaining, determined members, more than 20 takeovers, and three strikes (including one lockout), but ETFO locals prevailed. Salaries were reconciled up and working conditions preserved; in both cases some modest improvements were made. One local even managed to reinstate a retirement benefit lost in 1979.



It's Elementary A brief history of Ontario's public elementary teachers and their federations

conditions preserved; in both cases some modest improvements were made. One local even managed to reinstate a retirement benefit lost in 1979.

But bargaining wasn't all ETFO did that first year. The programs and services that the two federations had offered also had to be merged. Education and training programs offered in that first year included a training program for local leaders, summer curriculum courses, professional growth workshops, and credit courses. Curriculum Connections and Presenters on the Road were launched.

There were workshops for Aboriginal and racial minority women members, as well as leadership, employment equity, and collective bargaining training for women. New curriculum resources were created, including the nationally acclaimed anti-bias curriculum, *We're Erasing Prejudice for Good*.

ETFO consulted members from equality-seeking groups to see how the organization could meet their needs. It created a program to welcome new members and made presentations to future members at the faculties of education.

To keep in touch with its members ETFO launched a new website and created *Voice* magazine, which was mailed to each member's home. Information packages sent to stewards at every school included the newsletters *Link* and *Women's Issues*.

ETFO responded to government initiatives, presented position papers, lobbied the government, and developed relationships with the broader labour and social justice communities.

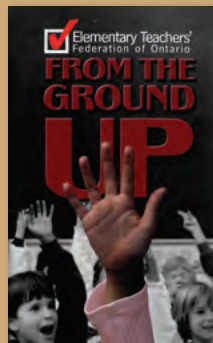
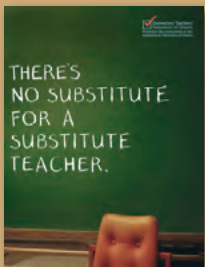
And ETFO also provided advice and assistance to hundreds of individual members. Not bad for a first year!

The 1999 spring election

Delegates to the 1998 ETFO Annual Meeting voted unanimously to work to defeat the Mike Harris government and elect MPPs who would promote high-quality public education. During the provincial election held in June, ETFO worked with other teacher federations, unions, and community groups to raise the profile of public education. ETFO produced billboards, leaflets, radio ads, and co-sponsored TV advertising. The provincial organization and many locals released members to work in Liberal and NDP campaigns. Mike Harris's government was re-elected, but 17 Conservative incumbents lost their seats including three cabinet ministers, one of them former Education Minister David Johnson.

Teacher testing

When the government threatened to force teachers into a cyclical testing program to maintain their certification, ETFO took control of the issue, and, before any details were announced, released *Ensuring Professional Standards in Ontario Education: A Response to the Teacher Testing Proposal*. The document showed that teacher testing failed to assess teacher competency, wasted taxpayers'



money, and had no precedent in Canada or the US. ETFO proposed alternatives that would benefit the education system, students, and teachers.

The paper called for

- enhanced, government-supported teacher professional development;
- development of a provincial model for teacher evaluation and professional growth, in partnership with education stakeholders; and
- creation of a mentoring program for new teachers.

Funding for elementary education

When the 2000-2001 grants provided additional funding for secondary programs but no new money for the elementary panel, ETFO responded. *Out of Focus: How Student-Focused Funding Undervalues Elementary Education* detailed how each grant shortchanged elementary students. As a direct result of ETFO's actions, the next provincial budget included additional money for the reduction of primary class sizes, \$70 million in special education funding for junior kindergarten and primary students, and an additional \$70 million for early-years reading initiatives.

Keeping extra-curricular activities voluntary

Other problems were also brewing. The *Education Act* increased the course load of secondary teachers and, as a result, many refused to volunteer for extra-curricular activities. Bill 74, the *Education Accountability Act*, made extra-curricular activities mandatory anytime, any place, and any day in the school year for both elementary and secondary teachers. It also denied teachers the right to bargain conditions around extra-curricular activities.

ETFO fought back. With our partners in the Ontario Teachers' Federation, ETFO explored a *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* challenge to the bill and a complaint to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

ETFO consulted its membership. Over 99 percent agreed Bill 74 represented an unwarranted intrusion into their professional role and was a direct attack on collective bargaining rights. With this strong mandate ETFO advised teachers not to take on extra-curricular activities during the 2000-2001 school year.

Keeping extra-curricular activities voluntary became one of ETFO's bargaining goals. ETFO's public relations campaign, *No More Bullying*, included radio spots, newspaper ads, and a special website that allowed members to fax their MPPs and put on the record their opposition to both Bill 74 and recertification. At the height of the campaign, the website attracted over 1,000 visitors a day, more than five times the normal traffic.

Teachers won. On June 12, the Minister announced she would not proclaim the part of Bill 74 that dealt with extra-curricular activities and, in the future, would deal separately with the elementary and secondary panels.



The campaign was a prime example of a multi-pronged approach to defeat a government initiative: legal action, data gathering to put an elementary face on the issue, swift consultation with members to get their support for action, partnerships with other stakeholders to strengthen the opposition, a media campaign that told the real story behind the legislation, and extensive public and private lobbying with government representatives.

It's Elementary

Building partnerships and presence

That summer, delegates to the 2000 Annual Meeting voted overwhelmingly to join the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), making ETFO the largest teachers' organization in the country affiliated with the labour movement. ETFO recognized that participation in the labour movement would give the federation added power to advance the cause of public education, high-quality public services, and the rights of workers.

Capitalizing on the success of the ETFO media campaigns, delegates also voted to establish a provincial political action/public relations fund to support activities to reclaim the education agenda, forge alliances with parents and the public, and protect and improve the working conditions of teachers and the learning conditions of students.

Protecting teachers as professionals

On June 12, 2001, under the guise of improving education and ensuring teacher competency, the government finally unveiled its teacher recertification plan. Bill 80, the *Stability and Excellence in Education Act, 2001*, required members of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) to participate in a five-year recertification cycle during which they would have to successfully complete 14 professional development courses. The prescribed set of courses gave teachers little flexibility. It did not take into account students' learning needs, teachers' own professional development goals, or the stage they were at in their careers.

The OCT would administer this Professional Learning Plan (PLP) and randomly select the first cohort of 40,000 practising teachers who would start their five-year cycle in September 2001. Those remaining would start the following year.

Fighting recertification was a challenge for teachers because many members of the public believed it would create greater accountability.

ETFO had to show that this was a myth. Teachers were taking part in professional development; accountability mechanisms such as performance appraisal were already in place; and the federation had a credible alternative plan. ETFO needed to educate members to ensure their support for strong and united action, and also win the support of parents and politicians.

ETFO's campaign – *Accountability YES/Recertification NO* – was a call to members to boycott the PLP plan while continuing to engage in and document their professional growth activities. It continued for three years and involved every service area, provincial and local leaders, and each individual member.

The campaign was a prime example of a multi-pronged approach to defeat a government initiative: legal action, data gathering to put an elementary face on the issue, swift consultation with members to get their support for action, partnerships with other stakeholders to strengthen the opposition, a media campaign that told the real story behind the legislation, and extensive public and private lobbying with government representatives.

A brief history of Ontario's public elementary teachers and their federations

The results were outstanding. Fewer than 14 percent of teachers complied with the PLP. But the government didn't budge. It was clear that winning this fight would require a change of government.

Fair funding – a member priority

Teacher federations, school boards, and parents all criticized government underfunding of education. In the spring of 2002, the government appointed Mordechai Rozanski to head the Education Equality Task Force to review the funding model. ETFO told the Task Force what members had said: class sizes were too large and supports too few; specialist teachers and programs were lost; special education was in crisis; workloads had increased; and the difference in per capita funding for elementary and secondary students was not only unfair but illogical.

The Task Force reported in December and confirmed that public education in Ontario needed an infusion of \$2 billion. The government quickly announced more funding for salary benchmarks, somewhat easing the 2002-2003 collective agreement negotiations.

Despite the extra money, boards were still under extreme financial pressure. Three public boards – Ottawa-Carleton, Hamilton-Wentworth, and Toronto – refused to make the spending cuts required to achieve balanced budgets. The government response was swift and brutal; they stripped these boards of their powers and appointed supervisors to oversee them.

In the spring ETFO launched *Fair Funding for Public Education* with a full public relations campaign based on the message *Restore funding. Restore programs. Restore democracy*. The specific plea to the public was *Help us help your kids*. Though Toronto, Hamilton-Wentworth, and Ottawa-Carleton were targeted, the campaign rolled out across the province prior to the anticipated provincial election.

Keeping in touch with members

From its inception ETFO reached out to members, checking on their attitudes to and their knowledge of their union. Did they read ETFO publications? Were they satisfied with ETFO programs? The responses were overwhelmingly positive.

For several years ETFO also gathered information through school-based surveys completed by ETFO stewards. These responses told the real story of the impact of funding cuts – bigger classes, heavier workloads, more paperwork, fewer programs, and crumbling schools.

At the same time, ETFO professional relations staff detected some alarming new trends – more teachers under review; more stress-related LTD claims; increased workloads due to the loss of administrators, support personnel, and specialist teachers; lack of supply teachers to cover absences; inadequate training and supports for teachers in new positions.

ETFO distributed this information widely. More importantly, however, the federation was able to develop strategies to address the issues members identified.

Despite the extra money, boards were still under extreme financial pressure. Three public boards – Ottawa-Carleton, Hamilton-Wentworth, and Toronto – refused to make the spending cuts required to achieve a balanced budget. The government response was swift and brutal; they stripped these boards of their powers and appointed supervisors to oversee them.

Analyzing the landscape – 2003

For four years ETFO worked with its locals, parents, the public, and opposition parties to make education a major focus of the next election campaign. Both the Liberals and the NDP gave ETFO written commitments that they would rescind the recertification legislation and reform the OCT to make it a truly self-governing body. Both parties adopted the ETFO class size policy.

All ETFO collective agreements were due to expire on August 31, 2004, creating both challenges and opportunities for the organization. Workload was a major issue – teachers were seeking improvements and boards wanted to strip workload provisions from agreements.

The funding formula was also a problem. Although the *Education Act* provided for an average of 200 minutes of preparation time for elementary teachers, the formula only funded 137 minutes. There were no provisions for special programs, lunchroom supervisors, or other supports necessary to run an effective school.

All of these factors converged to lead to the launch of *Building for Tomorrow*.

Building for Tomorrow

Delegates to the 2003 Annual Meeting approved a multi-year initiative to enhance bargaining and revitalize the organization. *Building for Tomorrow* included hiring additional bargaining staff; additional training for local negotiating teams, stewards, and members; a public relations campaign; and enhanced technology to support bargaining.

Election 2003

When the Liberal party won the October 2 election it promised to bring peace and stability to the education system. It pledged to treat teachers with respect, to form a genuine partnership with education groups, to inject more money into the system, to do away with the PLP, to make the OCT truly self-governing, and to reduce primary class size.

During its first five years ETFO proved that it could advance and protect the interests of members, negotiate sound collective agreements, mobilize against regressive legislation, provide professional development, train new leaders, advance social justice, partner with other unions and education stakeholders, and win the support of parents and the public. And it did all this in the face of a hostile government.

Now ETFO would demonstrate that it could work co-operatively with government while maintaining an unwavering commitment to its members and the issues that mattered to them.

Campaign 200 – the campaign for more preparation time

Campaign 200 – Planning Today, Building for Tomorrow, the first public manifestation of ETFO's multi-year plan, was unveiled in February 2004. With a government committed to reducing the size of primary classes, ETFO could concentrate on other member issues. Its bargaining priorities for

teachers and ESP/PSP members were 200 minutes of preparation time, a cap on supervision time, real salary increases, and improved leave and benefit plans. The demand for increased preparation time addressed workload issues but it also meant more programs and more specialist teachers.

Occasional teachers' bargaining priorities included ensuring the occasional teacher got the same timetable as the teacher being replaced and improved daily rates of pay.

On June 2, all ETFO locals signed takeover agreements making the provincial organization their bargaining agent. Bargaining began in earnest in the fall of 2004. During the winter teachers voted overwhelmingly in favour of going on strike to back their bargaining demands.

ETFO forges a new approach to bargaining

ETFO's bargaining goals had a hefty price tag and paying for them would require a funding commitment from the province. ETFO took advantage of the Minister's invitation to teacher unions to explore the feasibility of establishing a provincial framework for negotiations. For four months the federation worked with the minister and with the Ontario Public School Boards' Association to develop a provincial framework for salary, preparation time, and supervision time. Agreement was reached in April. The four-year accord included 200 minutes of preparation time by 2008, caps on supervision time, and a 10.6 percent salary increase. The government would fund the framework. Negotiations on the framework and on local issues proceeded with each district school board.

ETFO paved the way for a unique form of bargaining. It secured funding from the province for common issues but negotiated local issues and the application of the framework with individual school boards. By the end of June, all teacher locals had successfully negotiated new collective agreements.

There's no substitute ...

Occasional teacher bargaining followed. Occasional teacher leaders received training and another public relations campaign was unveiled to support bargaining – *There Is No Substitute for a Substitute Teacher*.

By the end of the year all occasional teacher locals had collective agreements that included the bargaining demands: timetable of the teacher being replaced and gains in their daily rate, some in excess of 25 percent, closing the gap between the highest and lowest rate significantly. In May the Near North Occasional Teacher Local staged a three-week strike before it was able to successfully conclude an agreement.

Closing the Gap

That was three years ago. In August 2008 all the collective agreements expire. And once again, ETFO has set a very ambitious agenda for the next round of bargaining. From the beginning,



Starting in the winter of 2007, ETFO embarked on a campaign to eliminate the \$711 funding gap between elementary and secondary students.

elementary education has been underfunded relative to secondary education. This underfunding has been a focus of ETFO since its creation. But the federation made a decision in 2007 that this could not go on. The number one bargaining priority for the 2008 round is to “Close the Gap” between elementary and secondary funding.

Starting in the winter of 2007, ETFO embarked on a campaign to eliminate the \$711 funding gap between elementary and secondary students. Television, print, and billboard advertising leading up to the provincial election in the fall of 2007 created public awareness of the issue and let the government know that the federation was serious. Since then, ETFO has continued to produce materials directed both to members and to the public. As President David Clegg has said “In this round of bargaining, we will focus on the gap, we will close the gap, and we will remake elementary education in the best interests of students, teachers, and the people of Ontario.”

Looking to the Future

In the first ten years of its existence, ETFO has served its members and won the respect of the public and recognition from the government.

But elementary education is still underfunded. Elementary teachers are still overworked. School boards and administrators are still trying to undermine collective agreements. Standardized testing still takes up too much time and energy to no useful purpose. Elementary students arrive at school each fall, eager to learn. But some are hungry, some are sick, and some need resources our schools aren’t providing. So the work continues, as it has for the past 100 years.

Throughout

the early 1800s the government attempted to establish publicly funded education in Upper Canada but made only marginal inroads. Early teaching positions were filled by the clergy or by individuals with few or no qualifications to teach. Local trustees competed with one another not for the best teachers but for the cheapest ones. One education historian said of the period "...a teaching post was commonly regarded as the last refuge of the incompetent, the inept, the unreliable."¹ This early perception of teachers would remain difficult to overcome and the struggle for recognition as a profession continued into the next century.

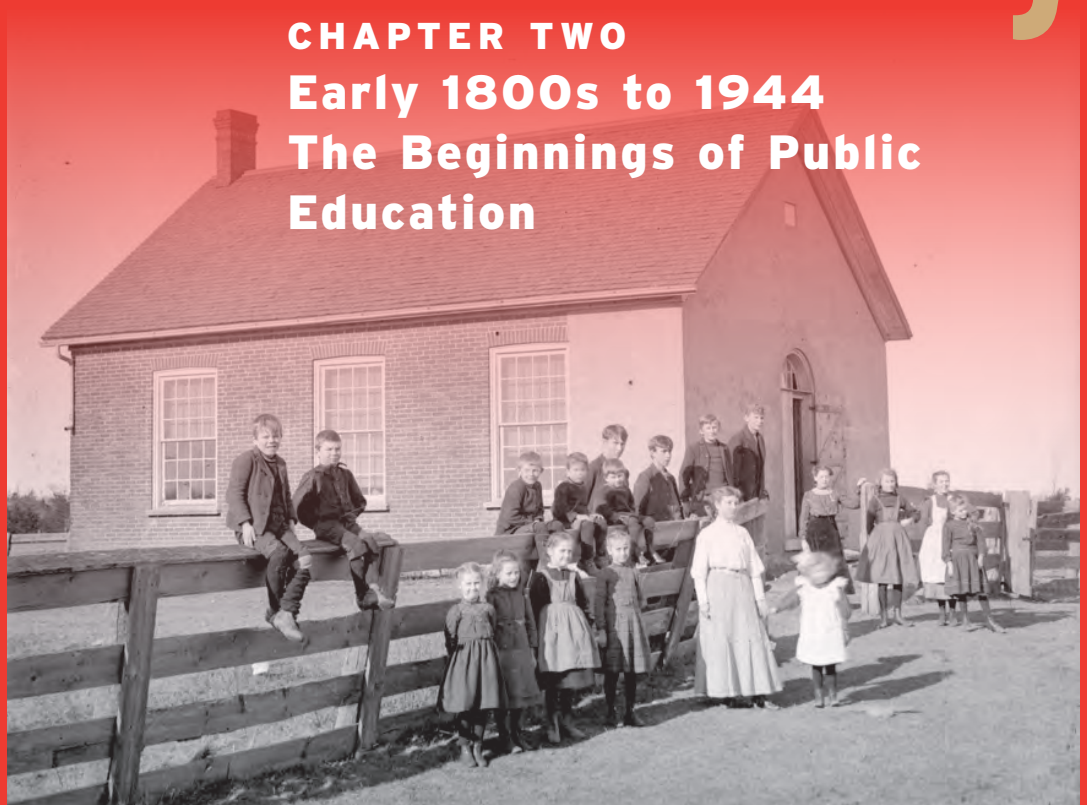
Schoolhouse, 1906. Archives of Ontario

A brief history of Ontario's public elementary teachers and their federations

It's Elementary

CHAPTER TWO

Early 1800s to 1944 The Beginnings of Public Education





Official delegates to the 1920 inaugural meeting of the CTF in Calgary included FWTAO president, Miss H.S. Arbuthnot (front row 2nd from left) and OPSMTF representative C.G. Fraser (back row, 2nd from right). *Clara Thomas Archives, York*

University



Teachers at
Church St. PS,
Toronto, 1915.

*Sesquicentennial
Museum & Archives,
Toronto District
School Board*



A class at Winchester PS, Toronto. *Archives of Ontario*



Students teachers practice teaching kindergarten at the Toronto Normal School. *Archives of Ontario*

Egerton Ryerson, appointed Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada in 1844, is generally considered to be the father of public education in Ontario. He was a committed advocate of publicly funded mass education. He once wrote, “On the importance of education generally we may remark, it is as necessary as the light – it should be as common as water, and as free as air.”¹ He was also aware that Ontario needed a disciplined workforce to support the industrial revolution.

While Ryerson was the driving force behind public education, the *Common School Act* of 1846 gave it life. Building on previous laws, it established a series of local school districts. Each district had three trustees who were responsible for hiring, paying, and firing teachers, and administering funds collected through local taxes and provincial grants. In order to provide some measure of uniformity and raise the standards of education, the Act also created normal schools, the province’s first teacher training institutions, and a system of provincially appointed inspectors.

The Toronto Normal School, the first in Ontario, opened in 1847. Entrance requirements were minimal. Those applying had to be over 16, be able to read and write, do simple arithmetic, and have a clergyman’s letter in hand attesting to their sound moral character. Lectures ran from 9 in the morning to 8 in the evening with a curfew set at 9:30. All students had to attend church on Sunday.² Women were allowed to attend but in 1853 school authorities established a rule that there could be no communication between male and female students.

Conditions for teachers were appalling, particularly in rural Ontario where most school boards consisted of a single one-room school, some with over 100 pupils. In return for poverty-level salaries, teachers prepared for and taught all grades and maintained discipline through measures considered criminal by today’s standards. They kept the schools clean, hauled wood for the stove, brought water from the well, and started a pot to boil in the morning so students, bringing whatever meager offerings they could from their homes, would have a hot lunch at noon. Some teachers tended gardens on the school site to provide additional food for themselves or their students.

Teachers had no job security, no sick leave, no pensions, no health insurance, no rights. Some



Egerton
Ryerson
.....



Miss Hazel
Roberts
(later Hazel
McWilliams)
of Hamilton,
FWTAO
president,
1923-1926.
.....



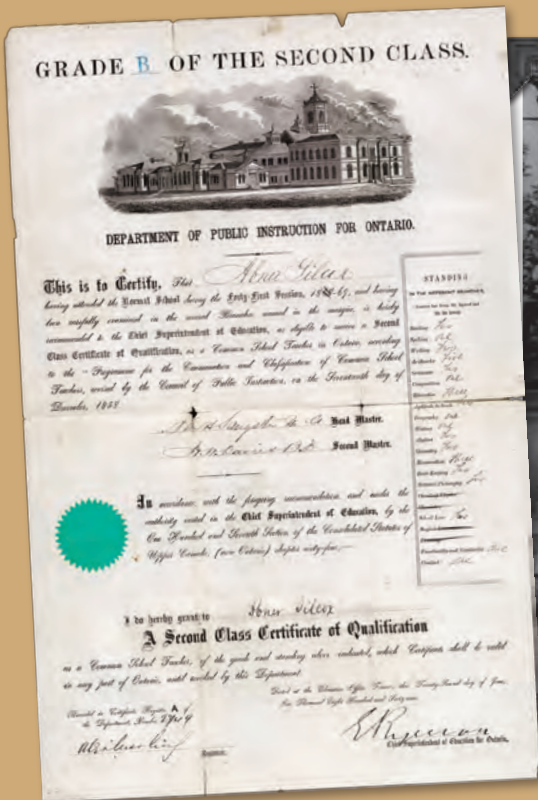
In 1920
Milton M.
Kerr became
the first
president
of the
OPSMTE.
.....



Schoolchildren crowding the blackboard at recess, ca. 1917. Archives of Ontario



A class of student teachers in a county model school (providing basic teacher training) possibly in Gananoque, 1905. Archives of Ontario



A Second Class Certificate of Qualification, 1869. Archives of Ontario



Canadian Teachers Federation - 13th Convention, 1934. Clara Thomas Archives, York University

lived under the harsh scrutiny of communities eager to judge their every action and worked for parsimonious trustees who could neither read nor write but who had ultimate control over their livelihoods.

In 1847, the first year government records listed teachers by gender, only one in five public school teachers was a woman. By 1860 women made up 25 percent of all teachers; by 1870, almost 50 percent, and by 1880 they made up the majority.³ Although women were well educated, made excellent teachers, and were able to maintain discipline, the driving force behind their increased numbers in education was economic. The great irony of public education in Ontario is that it was built on high principles but implemented with tight purse strings. Simply put, a school board could hire two women for the price of one man – even though his salary was already low.

A hierarchy developed and even though women made up the majority of teachers, they were isolated from positions of power and decision-making. Men earned more and became principals, headmasters, and inspectors.

Early teacher organizations

In the following decades a variety of organizations for teachers sprang up around the province. Many were government sponsored and most focused on some form of professional development. Many included ratepayers, trustees, inspectors, and other interested members of the public.

The first recorded teacher association organized specifically for the protection of teachers was the Teachers' Protective Association/Organization established in 1886 in Perth County. School officials were highly suspicious, considering it too radical. They feared that once organized, teachers would support strikes and boycotts for better wages – a radical idea at the time. Some organizations, like the Ontario Teachers' Alliance, were active only in urban areas.⁴

The birth of teacher federations

The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO) and the Ontario Public School Men Teachers' Federation (OPSMTF) – ETFO's predecessor organizations – were among

Common Rules For Teachers 1872

1. Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys and trim wicks.
2. Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the day's session.
3. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individual tastes of the pupils.
4. Men teachers may take one evening each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go to Church regularly.
5. After ten hours in school the teachers should spend their remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.
6. Women teachers who marry or engage in uncomely conduct will be dismissed.
7. Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.
8. Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barbershop will give good reason to suspect his worth, intentions, integrity and honesty.

The teacher who performs his labours faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of 25 cents per week in his pay providing the Board of Education approves.

Source:

Staton, Pat, and Beth Light. *Speak with Their Own Voices*. Toronto: Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1987, p. 23.

the first Ontario organizations formed to advance both the interests of their members and the status of the teaching profession.

In 1888 a group of eight women formed the Lady Teachers' Association of Toronto. Soon after, women teachers in London, Galt, and Ottawa formed similar associations. These early associations of elementary women teachers banded together in 1918 to form FWTAO.

Although talk about creating a federation for male elementary teachers began in 1918 in Peterborough, OPSMTF was officially formed in 1920. The original founders lobbied to have one federation for all teachers but when their efforts were unsuccessful, they formed their own organization.⁵

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation was formed in 1919. L'association des enseignants francontariens (AEFO) was formed in 1939, and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) in 1944.

In 1935 FWTAO, OPSMTF, and OSSTF formed the Ontario Teachers' Council (OTC) to help them pool their resources to pay fees to the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), which had been formed in 1920. In 1944 the OTC became the Ontario Teachers' Federation.

Building the new federations

Today, when teachers hold federation meetings in their staff rooms and busloads of teachers can be seen arriving at demonstrations or strike votes, it is hard to imagine the difficulties faced by federation pioneers. Because membership in FWTAO and OPSMTF was voluntary, many of their resources and much of their energy were devoted to signing up new members and renewing existing memberships.

In rural areas this was very difficult. Teachers worked in one-room schools scattered throughout the province, hard to find because of distance and poor travel conditions. A rural teacher boarding with a trustee, with no job security, aware that younger, cheaper, eager teachers were waiting in the wings, had to be brave to join the emerging federations. Reflecting the anti-union atmosphere of the times, school officials and many others were suspicious of the new federations. One newspaper called on an FWTAO organizer "to pack her kit and head for Russia."⁶

Teacher Pensions

A few early attempts to provide pensions for teachers were inadequate and woefully underfunded. Then in 1917 the Ontario legislature passed the *Teachers' Superannuation Act*. There were 14,000 members in the plan. They needed 40 years of service to receive an unreduced pension based on the best 15 years of earnings. The maximum pension was \$1,000 but the average being paid at the time was closer to \$250.

Source:

"Pension Plan Milestones." *Pension News*, Summer 2005, p. 2.

1870 average annual public school salaries¹

| | Men | Women |
|----------|--------|--------|
| Counties | \$ 260 | \$ 187 |
| Towns | \$ 450 | \$ 200 |
| Cities | \$ 597 | \$ 231 |

1925 average annual salaries²

| | Men | Women |
|----------|----------|----------|
| Rural | \$ 1,168 | \$ 994 |
| Cities | \$ 2,321 | \$ 1,397 |
| Towns | \$ 1,806 | \$ 1,082 |
| Villages | \$ 1,386 | \$ 1,001 |

Notes

- 1 Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher, 1800-1910*. p. 74.
- 2 Dear Teacher, FWTAO, 1978, p. 18.

An early OPSMTF organizer remembers,

“The greatest objection to joining was plain fear of the trustees and of the inspector. Early members preaching the federation gospel were very susceptible to the occupational hazard of dismissal. The monikers ‘rebel’, ‘troublemaker’, ‘trade-unionist’, and ‘rabble rouser’ were frequently attached to those making successful additions to the recruiting program. ... Some board members bluntly stated that the teacher could be fired. If that proved too difficult, the teacher could be punished by no raise in salary and, in some cases, reduced salary.”⁷

In spite of these drawbacks the hardy volunteers continued to give their time and energy to successfully build membership in both federations.

Working to protect members – 1918-1939

Even in hard times, higher salaries and job security were priority issues for both federations as they worked to improve the working lives of teachers.

Without the benefit of collective bargaining, teachers, particularly those in rural areas, negotiated their salaries individually. Both federations worked to help teachers get higher pay and to dissuade others from undercutting incumbents by working for less. They made gains in these early years, sometimes with the threat of strike,⁸ but the 1920s and 1930s proved to be difficult years. A serious recession, coupled with a teacher surplus in the mid-1920s stalled further improvements. Just as conditions began to improve at the end of the decade, what had been built up came tumbling down, and fell even further with the stock market crash of 1929.

Teachers know only too well that the response of government and school boards to any economic downturn is to cut costs, slash salaries, close schools, and fire teachers.

To cut costs, between 1920 and 1927,⁹ the Toronto Board denied women teachers their \$100 annual increments while continuing to give them to men. During the Depression of the 1930s the Hamilton Board threatened to close kindergartens, putting 33 teachers out of work and leaving many students without schooling.¹⁰ Other boards threatened terminations unless teachers accepted pay cuts. In rural areas teachers fared even worse, with those out of work undercutting each other for the chance of a job.

The provincial government response was to slash grants to education and cut salaries down to the statutory minimum of \$500. In 1928 the average salaries for men and women teachers were \$1,703 and \$1,155 respectively. Between 1930 and 1936 male teachers lost about 38 percent of their salaries and women 55 percent.¹¹

To keep the teacher surplus from lowering salaries and fuelling underbidding, the federations recommended adding an additional year to the normal school program. This would control the number of new teachers and would vastly improve teacher training. That, in turn, would improve student learning and raise the status of the profession. The government eventually agreed.

The federations made significant gains in protecting teachers as employees and improving their job security during these difficult years. In 1928 federations began lobbying for a model individual contract. It would make the terms of employment consistent across the province, outline each party's rights and obligations, and protect individual teachers from the impulsive or vengeful acts of trustees. By 1931 the provincial government had adopted the federations' model contract and encouraged boards to use it. It became law two decades later. The federations also successfully lobbied the government to pass *An Act Respecting Disputes Between Teachers and Boards/The Boards of Reference Act* protecting teachers by giving them the right to challenge dismissal in court. By 1943, boards were required to give reasons for dismissal in writing.

The federations also established programs to help individual teachers. FWTAO offered counselling services and hired a lawyer to assist members in their disputes with boards. This was a first and proved so popular in attracting new members that the federation limited access to legal counsel to new teachers and those who had been members for six months. An Employment Exchange Service helped women find jobs and a sick benefit fund provided some income security.

In ETFO Today ...

Over the decades, these early services expanded and adapted to become today's professional relations services (PRS), which now handles about 4,000 calls a year from ETFO members experiencing professional difficulty.

In the early years, most teachers' calls were about dismissal or salary. PRS work evolved to reflect the increasingly complex demands of teaching. ETFO established a Legal Support Committee to deal with requests from members for representation in criminal and civil cases, College of Teacher complaints, long-term disability and worker compensation claims, and much more. Approximately \$1 million per year is spent in legal fees for these cases. ETFO cases have set positive precedents in human and labour rights including the duty to accommodate, anti-harassment language, and same sex rights.

ETFO's video *It Can Happen to You* and other resources are used to inform teachers of their rights and teach them how to respond if they face allegations of misconduct.

Every day PRS staff help members cope with the challenges of teaching. Emphasizing prevention through member education,

PRS offers workshops on such topics as performance appraisal, conflict resolution, harassment and human rights, parent-teacher relationships, professionalism, professional boundaries, LGBT issues, pregnancy and parental leave.

The monthly broadsheet PRS Matters and regular articles in *Voice* advise members about emerging issues. Two resources, *After the Chalkdust Settles*, a health and wellness guide for teachers, and *Parent-Teacher Relationships, a guide to working with parents*, are among the most popular with ETFO members.

Local and provincial Breaking the Silence workshops provided by Equity and Women's Services explore how violence against women affects the personal and professional lives of ETFO members. ETFO creates curriculum documents and other resources to promote healthy relationships and to assist members dealing with children exposed to violence in the home.

ETFO also works with other federations and with the government to ensure the best possible protection of teacher rights when new initiatives are considered or new legislation is developed.

OPSMTF offered a range of services, including insurance plans, and developed a counselling and relations committee to help teachers in difficulty.

Teachers reach out to those in need

Despite earning little themselves, elementary teachers were always ready to help others in need. The Depression hit Canada's western provinces first and Ontario teachers sent money, food, and clothing to colleagues working for reduced pay, if they were paid at all. Many local teacher groups adopted western schools. When their own salaries plummeted, Ontario teachers still collected children's clothes and shoes, fed their students hot meals in class, and sent firewood home to parents. Since unemployed single women didn't qualify for relief programs, Toronto women teachers gave one percent of their meagre pay to support them.

When the Depression ended teachers moved directly into war work. Some spent their summers working on farms or in war industries. Others worked with refugee children, raised money, did administrative work, collected used materials like paper and rubber that factories needed, and volunteered for a variety of government committees formed to advance the war effort.

More than 200 women teachers spent the summer of 1943 filling fuses at the General Engineering Company in Scarborough. Their pay and working conditions were far superior to anything they knew in the schools, and the company magazine ran a story about them that read, in part, "Teachers expressed amazement at facilities provided for employees in a modern war

In ETFO Today ...

ETFO continues the work of its predecessors. Through the Canadian Teachers' Federation, ETFO supports such international programs as Project Overseas and initiatives in South Asia and West Africa. ETFO supports literacy and teacher training projects in Peru and Tanzania and for many years, has supported Women for Women in Afghanistan. The ETFO Humanity Fund, a bargaining priority for locals, supports the Stephen Lewis Foundation, which works in Africa to counter the devastating effect of HIV/AIDS on women and children, in addition to other charities.

ETFO provides financial assistance to national and provincial organizations working for social change such as the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice, Ontario Health Coalition, Pay Equity Coalition, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, Women's Legal

Education and Action Fund (LEAF), December 6 Fund, Make Poverty History Campaign, Toronto Disaster Relief Committee, the Native Women's Association of Canada, and the National Congress of Black Women Foundation.

ETFO locals and members support social justice groups in their communities, working on anti-poverty and homelessness issues, and supporting women's crisis shelters, literacy programs for Aboriginal children, and other initiatives.

Whether it is tsunami relief for Sri Lanka, flood relief for New Orleans, assistance to colleagues in British Columbia, or support for residents of Burma, ETFO members have always been generous in their support.

plant. Free bus service! Low cost sickness insurance and hospitalization! Free medical care ... Two recesses a day with no children to look after. ... These we must assume from their surprise are not things usually provided for school teachers.”¹²

The war years and mandatory membership

September 10, 1939. Canada was officially at war. Most teacher salaries had not recovered from Depression-era cuts and were well under \$2,000 per year,¹³ and teachers left the classroom for the more lucrative work in war industries. Men – and some women – enlisted in the armed forces. Although married women and retirees were welcomed back into schools, the exodus created a severe teacher shortage. The federal government declared teaching an essential service and forced teachers to remain in the positions they held in 1942-43.¹⁴ This made bargaining wage increases extremely difficult.

For many years the federations had lobbied the government to make federation membership mandatory. Teacher federations in Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, and New Brunswick already had mandatory membership. The Ontario federations finally found an ally in George Drew, elected premier in 1943. Education issues were an important part of his election platform and he assumed the education portfolio when he became premier. It also helped that Drew had a minority government with the relatively new Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) as the official opposition and some speculate that Drew wanted to appease teachers to prevent them from turning too far “left”.

A 1943 poll showed 93 percent of teachers favoured mandatory membership.¹⁵ With this strong mandate the federations renewed their efforts and in April 1944 the *Teaching Profession Act* was passed. It created the Ontario Teachers’ Federation as the umbrella group with five teacher federations (FWTAO, OPSMTF, OSSTF, AEFO, OECTA) as affiliates.

The *Teaching Profession Act* gave statutory recognition to the federations as professional organizations eliminating any question about their right to represent their members. Federations would raise standards, enforce a code of ethics, and establish their right to bargain with school boards. They would put resources into member programs and member protection. With mandatory membership in place, the federations were ready to make history.

Notes

- 1 Ryerson, Egerton, an early editorial in the *Christian Guardian* (founded 1829).
- 2 French, Doris. *High Button Bootstraps*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1968, p. 17
- 3 Althouse, J. G. *The Ontario Teacher: 1800-1910*. Toronto: W.J. Gage Ltd., 1967, p. 46.
- 4 Hopkins, R.A. *The Long March*. Toronto: Baxter Publishing, 1969, p. 35.
- 5 Morgan, Charlotte. "Happy 75th Anniversary, OPSTF" in *OPSTF News*, February 1996, pp. 6-7.
- 6 Labatt, Mary. *Always a Journey*. Toronto: Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1993, p. 22.
- 7 Hopkins, p. 56.
- 8 French, p. 43
- 9 Labatt, p. 18.
- 10 French, p. 77.
- 11 Staton, Pat, and Beth Light. *Speak with Their Own Voices*. Toronto: Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1987, p. 100.
- 12 French, p.97.
- 13 Hopkins, p. 391.
- 14 Federal Order in Council P.C. 4862
- 15 Hopkins, p. 123.

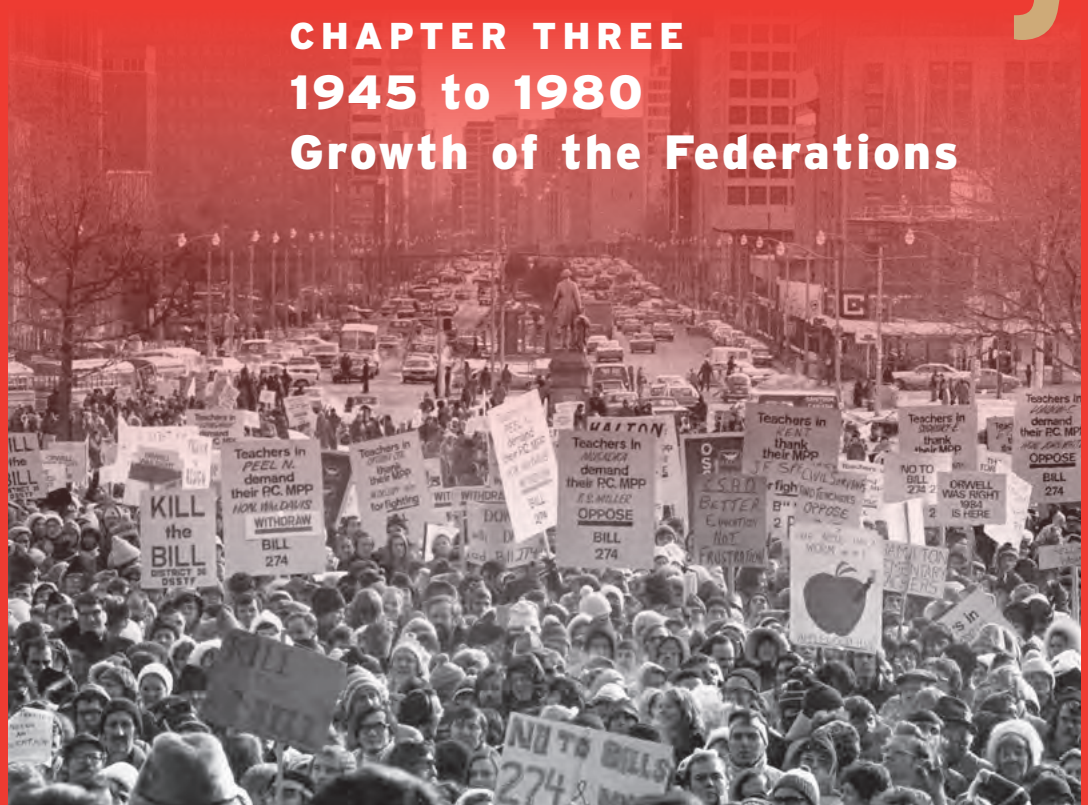
A brief history of Ontario's public elementary teachers and their federations

It's Elementary

CHAPTER THREE

1945 to 1980

Growth of the Federations



Teachers rally at the Ontario Legislature. December 18, 1973.

Photo: CP Images

1973 Queen's Park rally. Clara Thomas Archives, York University



FWTAO professional development conference, 1968. Clara Thomas Archives, York University



December 18, 1973. Clara Thomas Archives, York University



Toronto District School Board
Sesquicentennial Museum and
Archives



Toronto District School Board Sesquicentennial Museum and Archives



The teacher federations survived a recession, a depression, and two world wars. They emerged from the war years with their existence and their memberships guaranteed by the 1944 *Teaching Profession Act*. The new Act boosted federation membership. Overnight FWTAO membership jumped to 12,500 from 5,300¹ and that of OPSMTF to 3,400 from about 1,600² members. OTF and the five affiliates became effective lobby groups with government and formidable advocates for teachers with school boards and the public.

With wartime restrictions lifted, the federations could resume action on their key issues – raising the status of the profession and improving the economic conditions of teachers.

When school opened in September 1947 Ontario's elementary schools were short over 1,000 teachers. Classrooms were bursting; students had to share desks and learning materials. Boards scrambled to find teachers. Married women, sent home after the war, were called back. The postwar baby boom brought both challenges and opportunities. In 1945-46 there were 436,709 public elementary school students in Ontario. Ten years later there were 643,951, an increase of almost 50 percent.³

The push for professionalism

The federations believed the teacher shortage provided an opportunity to improve salaries to encourage people to enter or return to teaching. The federations worked to enhance teacher professionalism. They encouraged members to improve their qualifications and to adhere to the code of professional ethics outlined in the *Teaching Profession Act*. They endorsed higher standards for teacher education and university degrees for all teachers.

In a crushing blow to the federations' efforts, the government responded by lowering standards for entrance to the profession and issuing letters of permission to people with no or incomplete teaching qualifications.⁴ In 1952 the government again lowered standards to give a temporary certificate to a grade 12 graduate who completed a six-week summer course.

Faced with an increasing number of members with little or no training, and in an effort to maintain standards, both federations developed their first in-service programs. FWTAO organized conferences and workshops, developed recommended reading lists, and encouraged its local



1,500 students march to support teachers

[Small, illegible text from a newspaper clipping, likely the article mentioned in the caption above.]

Why have we, the teachers of Ontario, asked Premier Davis to withdraw the emergency legislation embodied in Bill 274?

1. It unilaterally deprives teachers of a right they have already exercised — the right to wage.
2. It threatens the civil rights of a large section of Ontario citizens.
3. It is premature and interferes with negotiations already underway on pending proposals.
4. It perpetuates established relations between teachers and the school boards which in the vast majority of instances are positive and constructive.

We ask your support in opposing the legislation.

C. P. Williamson, President
Ontario Teachers' Federation

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario
Ontario Public School Men Teachers' Federation
L'Association des Enseignants Français-Ontariens
Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association

Ontario Teachers' Federation advertisement, 1973. Toronto District School Board Sesquicentennial Museum and Archives



Ottawa, December 18, 1973. CP Images

Courtesy Ontario Federation of Labour



associations to offer professional development opportunities.⁵ OPSMTF, recognizing its members were mostly intermediate-grade teachers, vice-principals, and principals, offered summer courses in school supervision, administration, and effective practices for intermediate classrooms.⁶ From these humble beginnings both federations developed extensive professional development departments.

The fight for equal pay

One of the reasons women teachers had organized originally was to improve their economic conditions. Economic downturns, global conflict, and general social mores delayed their fight, but in 1945 the FWTAO annual meeting endorsed the concepts of equal pay and equal opportunity for advancement for both men and women teachers. They took the issue to the OTF, believing its endorsement and that of the affiliates would give more clout to their efforts.

The equal pay resolution met with “spirited discussion”.⁷ It was sent to the affiliates for study, was referred to the educational finance and resolutions committees, and finally passed at the December 1946 meeting with the following wording:

*That the OTF favour the policy of equal opportunity and equal pay for equal qualifications and responsibilities as between men and women in the schools of Ontario.*⁸

In 1951, five years after teachers had endorsed the concept, the Ontario government passed the *Fair Remuneration for Female Employees Act*, legislating equal pay.

But in spite of OTF policy and provincial legislation, many school boards, and even some local men’s groups, were cool to the idea of equal pay and to bargaining jointly with the women teachers.⁹ While salary schedules gradually eliminated disparities in pay, boards circumvented the principles of equal pay by offering sports and supervision allowances or even marriage bonuses to their male teachers. It took another 20 years to phase out these inequities.

The push for better salaries

The federations’ codes of ethics said teachers shouldn’t accept salaries below an established minimum, usually coinciding with the level of provincial grant. In 1947 it was “unprofessional” to accept a starting salary below \$1,500. In 1954 accepting less than \$2,400 was considered

In ETFO Today ...

ETFO continues to provide a wide variety of quality professional learning opportunities designed to meet the needs and interests of new and experienced teachers: workshops, book clubs, credit courses, conferences, online programs, summer academy, and AQ and principals’ courses. Some focus on specific academic subjects, grade levels, or issues like special education and classroom management. Others enhance teachers’ leadership skills, or deal with societal issues such as body image and global education. Still other workshops reflect the needs of a changing student and teacher population. They deal with such topics as anti-racist education, Aboriginal issues, homophobia and heterosexism, media awareness, and deconstructing bias and prejudice in schools. ETFO’s resource on new teacher induction has been a model for many programs.

ETFO conducts research, and in cooperation with other education partners publishes documents on educational and social issues.

ETFO members and staff influence education policy through their work on Ministry of Education committees and the minister’s partnership tables, as well as their work with other affiliates and education stakeholders.

The Formation of QECO

Consistent evaluation of qualifications was essential to make salary grids effective. To accomplish this the four affiliates representing elementary teachers created the Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO) in the late 1960s. QECO issued its first statement in 1971. ETFO members can access QECO services at any time.

“unethical.”¹⁰ The federations offered to help teachers achieve these salaries, but with over 6,000 school boards, some with only a single one-room school, it was a difficult task.

To address disparities in salaries – between men and women, urban and rural, and north and south – the federations gradually developed a new approach to bargaining. They moved away from the concept of pay determined by gender or grade level, to salary schedules based on qualifications, years of experience, and additional responsibility. This gradually developed into a grid with minimum and maximum pay and

annual increments in each of seven categories. Additional allowances recognized the increased responsibilities of principals, vice-principals, consultants, and other positions.

Salary schedules served a number of purposes. They eliminated individual bargaining, underbidding, and divisions based on gender or grade taught. A series of increments recognized teacher experience and also provided an incentive to stay with a board. The federations assumed that pay linked to qualifications would encourage members to take courses and would attract a high calibre of teacher, thus improving the profession’s image.

These were the very early years of collective bargaining. Salaries, benefits, accumulation of sick leave, and leave plans were the high-priority items. Although the federations had the legal right to represent members, teachers were excluded from the provisions of the *Labour Relations Act* so boards were not required to bargain with teacher federations. Many teachers resisted the salary schedule because they thought they would fare better on their own.

Nevertheless, FWTAO and OPSMTF gradually developed a system of joint bargaining and procedures to deal with difficult bargaining situations. They created the “grey letter,” similar to the current “pink listing,” to put pressure on boards to settle. Without legal bargaining rights or the right to strike, the only legal way teachers could withdraw services and sanction a board was to stage mass resignations in December or August. This was a risky tactic, one the federations did not use lightly.

From 1945 to 1955 teacher salaries improved significantly. The average wage increased by almost 90 percent for men and 130 percent for women. Women made significant progress on equal pay. In 1945, their salaries were about 67 percent of men’s; by 1954, the percentage had risen to 82.4 percent.¹¹

During the next several years both federations developed bargaining departments whose staff travelled the province training local teachers on salary committees or economic policy committees (forerunners of today’s bargaining committees) how to negotiate.

Married women bring new priorities

Most boards forced women to resign when they married. During the war years many married women had returned to work as temporary employees. They were expected to leave at war's end and go back to homemaking. In 1945-46 some 1,700 teachers didn't return to the classroom; 1,000 of them were married women – some of them newly married during the year.¹²

However, the baby boom and the resulting increase in enrolment, as well as the general postwar teacher shortage created opportunities for women teachers not available to women in other occupations. Believing it to be a short-term measure, school boards reluctantly hired married women as “special staff” at lower pay on temporary contracts that they renewed annually and could terminate on short notice, especially if they found teachers they considered more desirable. And often they considered even 17-year old men with only a six-week summer course more desirable than more qualified married women.¹³

When women teachers on permanent staff married, their contracts also became temporary so that, the boards claimed, they could leave when family responsibility demanded, or if they became pregnant at inconvenient times. But the boards' motives were called into question when one board changed the contract status of a woman who had taught for 30 years and was married just two years before she became eligible for a pension.¹⁴

Married women also faced criticism from colleagues and communities who questioned how they could be successful teachers if their loyalties were divided between home and school. Many colleagues thought married women were working for “pin money” and would hold back the demand for higher salaries.¹⁵ Many married women teachers were restrained in their militancy by the fact that children in school, families in the community, and their husbands' jobs meant they couldn't threaten to move to a distant school or board for a higher salary. Because of either prejudice or jealousy, many people resented two-income families. In smaller communities, a woman thought to be too assertive about getting a higher salary could put her husband's employment in jeopardy.¹⁶

But married women were in the work force to stay¹⁷ and their numbers grew so that they comprised some two thirds of

FWTAO – OPSMTF Salary Schedule

Approved by Annual Meeting 1965

| Category Years of exp. | A3 Degree + 3 yrs. study | A Basic Cert. + Degree | D Basic Teaching Cert. |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 10 | 11,500 | 10,000 | 6,100 |
| 9 | 11,100 | 9,600 | 6,000 |
| 8 | 10,700 | 9,200 | 5,900 |
| 7 | 10,300 | 8,800 | 5,800 |
| 6 | 9,900 | 8,400 | 5,700 |
| 5 | 9,500 | 8,000 | 5,600 |
| 4 | 9,000 | 7,500 | 5,200 |
| 3 | 8,500 | 7,000 | 4,800 |
| 2 | 8,000 | 6,500 | 4,400 |
| 1 | 7,500 | 6,000 | 4,000 |
| 0 | 7,000 | 5,500 | 3,600 |
| Inc. | 500 x 5 400 x 5 | 500 x 5 400 x 5 | 400 x 5 100 x 5 |

Allowances:

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Principal | \$ 250 per room |
| Vice-Principal | \$ 50 per room |
| Supervisor | Minimum of \$ 800 |
| Assistant Supervisor | Minimum of \$ 400 |
| Consultants, etc. | Minimum of \$ 400 |

Source

FWTAO Newsletter, 1965-66; No. 5

the FWTAO membership by 1968.¹⁸ Their presence created new bargaining priorities, not only equal employment status but also maternity and parental leaves. In 1954, pressed by FWTAO, OTF passed policies about maternity leave and the employment of married women.¹⁹

Over the years the federations continued to negotiate such improvements to parental leaves as accumulation of seniority and increment, board-paid benefit plans, paid leave, and paternity leave. Provincial legislation has been amended periodically to incorporate negotiated improvements.

The rise of teacher militancy

The social movements of the 1960s and 1970s brought increased awareness of individual and collective rights and responsibilities. Many people took a critical look at themselves and their role in shaping their world. The contraceptive pill revolutionized family planning and women's ability to combine family with career. Feminism's second wave was building as women realized equality meant more than having the right to vote. The 1971 *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women* outlined the need for action on women's rights in Canada. The American civil rights movement shone a spotlight on the devastating effects of prejudice. The antiwar movement prompted citizens to look at all authority with a new and critical eye. The publication of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* marked the awakening of the environmental movement.

At the same time, society cast a critical eye on the education system. *Living and Learning*, a 1968 report of a provincial government royal commission into education, told educators that focusing on the 3Rs was not enough; they had to teach the whole child using a variety of new methods, including individualized instruction. The report's recommendations were implemented swiftly, without consultation, and with limited resources for teachers.

In 1969 the provincial government centralized control of education when it consolidated school boards. One-room schools were closed and staff and students moved into new larger schools. Board consolidation improved the general situation for teachers, but large modern schools also created irritants such as more paperwork and less autonomy.

Consolidation brought with it new structures for the federations, with local associations and districts conforming to the new school board boundaries. Now less isolated, teachers had colleagues close at hand with whom to share ideas and concerns. They could call on local presidents and negotiating committees and organize to take action on issues.

Consolidation was costly and by 1970 the provincial government had imposed expenditure ceilings, giving school boards that had overspent time to get their finances in order. Boards responded by increasing class sizes; firing teachers and hiring teaching assistants; cancelling special education and ESL programs; replacing teacher librarians with technicians, and junior kindergarten teachers with early childhood education graduates; and giving one principal two or more schools to administer.

At the same time schools and teachers were expected to do more; new topics such as sex education, values education, and environmental concerns were added to the curriculum without

sufficient training or supports for teachers.

All these factors converged and created a new teacher militancy which was soon reflected in bargaining. The years of quiet self-sacrifice were over. Teachers demanded a decent wage and more control over their working conditions. They wanted smaller classes, relief from ever-increasing paperwork and supervision, and a say in what they taught and how. They wanted quality education for their students and quality of life for themselves.

December 18, 1973

Teachers' demands for better working conditions were resisted strongly by school boards that believed these issues were the sole right of management. The new teacher bargaining stance led to an increased number of impasses, all of which received considerable media attention. A concerned provincial government appointed the Committee of Inquiry into Negotiation Procedures Concerning Elementary and Secondary Schools of Ontario, known as the Reville Committee named for the retired judge who chaired it. Teachers dubbed its 1972 report "The Reviled Report."²⁰

The committee's recommendations gave power decisively to school boards. It turned the tide for teachers and even the meekest now demanded free collective bargaining, the right to negotiate any term or condition of employment, and the right to strike.

Action came sooner than most expected. In the fall of 1973, 17 local bargaining units from OECTA and OSSTF reached an impasse in negotiations and teachers submitted letters of resignation effective December 31, potentially leaving some 180,000 students without teachers when schools reopened in January. Reacting swiftly, the government tabled two pieces of legislation by December 10. Bill 274 changed the effective date of the resignations to August 31, and Bill 275, bargaining legislation, mandated compulsory arbitration while excluding the right to strike.

The federations quickly organized protests. FWTAO and OPSMTF supported the other federations, contacting more than 3,000 elementary schools by phone and telegram. On December 18, 1973, 80,000 of the province's 105,000 teachers left their classrooms. Some 30,000 attended a rally at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto and then marched to Queen's Park. One favourite story about the protest is that the minister of education and the premier knew they were defeated when, from their office windows, they saw busloads of nuns, OECTA members, joining the protesters. They withdrew the legislation within days.

Bill 100 – teachers get bargaining legislation

It took another two years of consultation before the government passed the *School Boards' and Teachers' Negotiations Act*, in 1975. Bill 100, the first bargaining legislation for teachers, was considered very progressive for its time.

During the consultation, boards argued that only salary and benefits should be negotiable,

leaving everything else for management to decide. They also opposed the right to strike. The federations lobbied for full or open scope bargaining – anything put on the table would be negotiable. Teachers won this right. They also won the right to strike, which came with the proviso that principals and vice-principals, still federation members then, would have to remain on duty in the schools during any sanction.

For the first time in their long history, teachers had the statutory right to bargain and boards had to negotiate with them in good faith. Old agreements, some only five or six pages, eventually became lengthy documents outlining the rights and responsibilities of both parties. Teachers gradually won agreement on provisions covering such issues as class size, preparation and supervision time, length of the school day, grievance procedures, just cause and human rights clauses, leave plans, and much more.

At the same time, however, the new legislation meant that occasional teachers were no longer considered fee-paying members of their respective federations when they had worked for 20 days as had been past practice. All of a sudden these teachers were left without representation.

From boom to bust – the teacher surplus

The baby boom ended by the mid-1960s and there followed years of declining enrolments. In 1971 elementary school enrolments dropped by almost 9,000 students. For the first time since the Dirty Thirties teacher college graduates couldn't find jobs. Elementary teachers faced layoffs and redundancy. For the most part, school boards followed the principle of seniority, but in the absence of collective agreement protections there were many abuses.

Teachers who had always received satisfactory evaluations suddenly got poor reports and faced termination. New hires were told to sign letters of resignation when they signed contracts so boards could say they had no redundancy at year's end. Some administrators created a cadre of "protected programs" that really protected selected teachers rather than the programs. Many married women were pressured to resign or to go part-time to save jobs for others. Women who had left the profession when they started families (before there was statutory maternity leave) either could not find jobs or were locked into part-time positions. Between 1971 and 1978 the number of elementary teachers declined by 5,500; however, the number of men went up by 10 percent while the number of women declined by 5 percent.²¹

Annual Salaries, 1960¹

Teachers \$3,961

Business proprietors \$5,462

Dentists \$10,662

Doctors \$15,264

Annual Salaries, 1976²

Elementary teachers (female) \$15,165

Elementary teachers (male) \$19,337

Supermarket cashiers \$10,186

Steelworkers \$14,252

University professors \$27,000

Notes

1. "Dear Teacher," Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1978, p. 34
2. "Dear Teacher," p. 47

The federations worked to reverse teacher attrition by negotiating collective agreement provisions, some of which are still key today. These included

- pupil-teacher ratios to keep boards from declaring unjustifiable surpluses,
- seniority and redundancy procedures with objective, impersonal criteria to identify who would be laid off, and
- job-sharing clauses, seniority protection for part-time teachers, deferred salary leave plans, early retirement incentives, and other creative solutions.

Today elementary schools face another period of declining enrolment. The 2006 ETFO Annual Meeting voted in favour of negotiating job-sharing language into current collective agreements.

Conclusion

The federations were leaders in seeking improvements in salaries and working conditions for their members. These improvements eventually became standard practice and provincial law. Today's teachers continue to benefit from those protections.

But their struggles were by no means over. In the next two decades, women would seek equal opportunity for promotion; the federations would take a hard look at their grid structures in response to provincial pay equity legislation; equity-seeking groups would begin to make their voices heard; and the federations would battle Bob Rae's Social Contract and Mike Harris's Common Sense Revolution.

Notes

1. Gaskell, Sandra, "The Problems and Professionalism of Women Elementary Public School Teachers in Ontario, 1944-1954." Doctor of Education Thesis, Toronto: OISE, University of Toronto, 1989, p. 41.
2. Hopkins, R.A. *The Long March*. Toronto: Baxter Publishing, 1969, pp. 120,155.
3. Gaskell, p.24.
4. Gaskell, p. 156. In the immediate postwar period almost 6 percent of the province's elementary teachers operated on letters of permission.
5. Labatt, Mary, *Always a Journey*, Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1993, p. 61.
6. Hopkins, p. 206.
7. Labatt, p. 47.
8. *Educational Courier*, February 1947.
9. Hopkins, p. 209.
10. Hopkins, p. 182.
11. Gaskell, p. 134.
12. Gaskell, p. 22.
13. Gaskell, pp. 69-71.
14. Gaskell, p. 204.
15. Gaskell, p. 146.
16. Gaskell, p. 203.
17. Gaskell, p. 33. By 1951 about one third of women teachers were married.
18. Labatt, p. 126.
19. *FWTAO Bulletin*, February 1954.
20. It recommended: local negotiations with teachers forming their own bargaining committees but boards able to hire professional negotiators; principals were encouraged to negotiate separately from the teachers; the scope of negotiations was limited to compensation; the establishment of a Professional Research Bureau to collate and disseminate data; the establishment of an adjudicative tribunal, appointed and paid by the government to make final and binding decisions in the event of an impasse in negotiations.
21. Labatt, pp. 232-39.

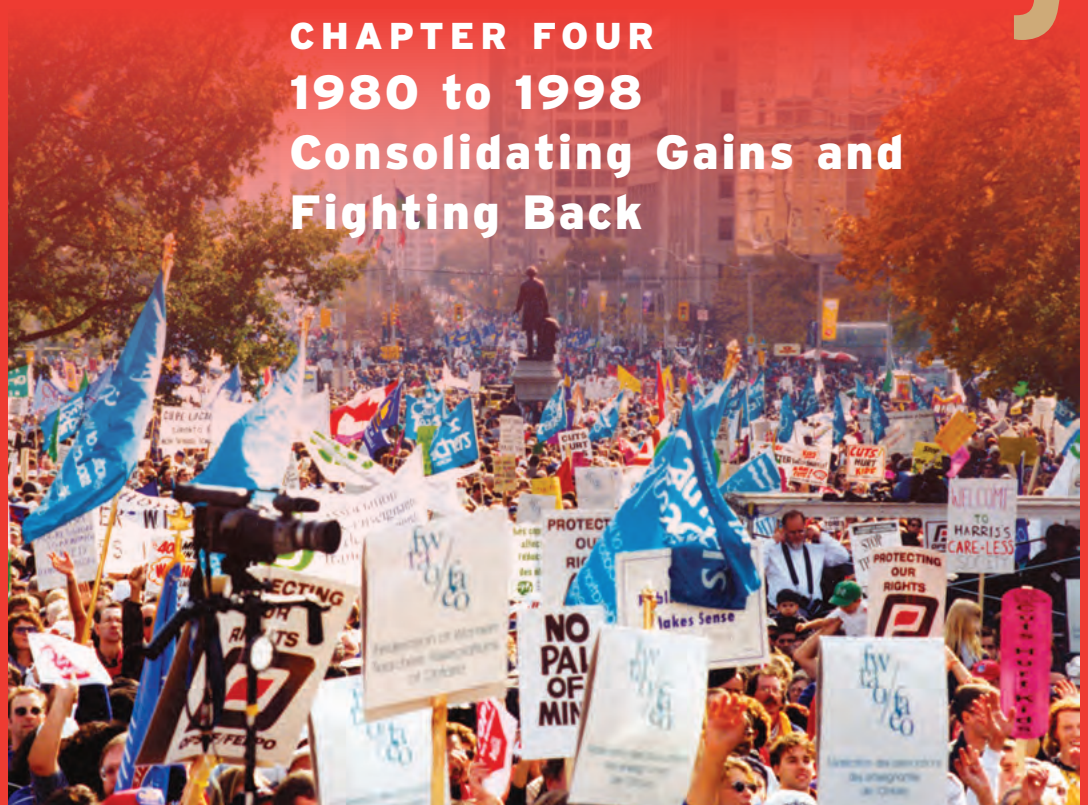
A brief history of Ontario's public elementary
teachers and their federations

It's Elementary

CHAPTER FOUR

1980 to 1998

Consolidating Gains and
Fighting Back





The 1980s - Decade of Equity

Although the 1960s and 1970s were the years of consciousness-raising, the rise of teacher militancy, and the beginnings of many social justice movements, it was during the 1980s that progress on equity issues was made in policy, legislation, union structure, and collective agreements.

In 1982 Canada got a constitution. Section 15, the main equality rights section of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, came into effect on April 17, 1985. The Charter's enshrinement of women's rights was the result of intensive work by women, including teachers, who helped organize the 1981 Women's Constitutional Conference to push for women's equality. FWTAO (and later ETFO) gave support to the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) to ensure that women's rights were upheld.

Trade unions responded to the demand for equality in part by creating designated positions on their executives. The first labour organization in Canada to do so was the Ontario Federation of Labour, which in 1983 designated seats specifically for women on its executive. Other unions soon followed, and designated positions expanded to include visible minorities; Aboriginal Canadians; people living with disabilities; gay, lesbian, and transgendered persons; and youth.

Greater equality in schools

Amendments to the *Education Act* made education more accessible to students with special needs, giving them more opportunities and eventually removing labels like "trainable retarded" from the education vocabulary. Teacher federations supported the new opportunities but demanded funding to back up the move toward integration of special needs students. They also made a renewed thrust in negotiating working conditions clauses to ensure that class sizes were appropriate and that teachers had the resources and the time to do their work effectively. At the beginning of the decade, only a handful of elementary agreements contained preparation-time language. By the end of the decade, following the 1987 strike for preparation time in Metro Toronto, almost every teacher collective agreement had such provisions. ETFO's *Campaign 200* continued that initiative.



The federations fought for just-cause clauses prohibiting boards from firing teachers without just cause, and for protections against discrimination and sexual harassment. Paid pregnancy leave, became a major focus in bargaining.

Equal opportunity for women teachers

Although women elementary teachers succeeded in eliminating many discriminatory practices in the workplace, they soon faced another challenge – barriers to promotion.

In 1980, after continued lobbying by FWTAO, the ministry finally changed the requirements for admission to the Principals' Course. Interested applicants could apply directly and not through their boards. A good indication of women's interest was the change in attendance. In 1975, only 18 percent of the participants were women; by 1984, four years after the restrictions were removed, 33 percent of participants were women.¹

Equal opportunity for equity-seeking groups

Ontario's population was diverse and becoming more so, but the makeup of the teaching staff in schools did not reflect this change. In the early 1990s, the Ontario government released the discussion paper *Working towards Equality* and announced an extensive consultation on the implementation of employment equity. Legislative guarantees would be extended to women, visible minorities, Aboriginal persons, and persons with disabilities. School boards would be required to apply the *Employment Equity Act* and to establish policies on antiracism and ethnocultural equity.

The legislation was short-lived; the Mike Harris government repealed the Act shortly after coming to power in 1995.

Pay equity

Equal-pay legislation required that people performing the same job be paid equally regardless of gender; however, it did not eliminate gender discrimination in employment. Certain jobs were considered women's work and paid less. Salesladies earned less than stock boys, nurses' aides less than orderlies, and clerical workers less than machine operators. The classic example was Queen's Park switchboard operators, women who had more education and more skills than male parking lot attendants but who were paid considerably less. In the 1980s a female university graduate entering the workforce could expect to earn about as much as a male high school dropout.

Surviving Restraints

It seems that no decade is without its challenges. The provincial *Inflation Restraint Act* of 1982 curtailed bargaining rights for 500,000 public sector employees including teachers. It removed the right to strike and the right to arbitration, extended collective agreements, and held salary settlements to a maximum of 9 percent for 1982-83 and 5 percent for the following year. The federations worked to get the best rulings possible for teachers and were partially successful when they launched a Charter of Rights and Freedoms challenge. While the court upheld the law's compensation restrictions, it struck down provisions curtailing bargaining and the right to strike on noncompensation items.

At the bargaining table, the federations pushed for nonmonetary clauses such as just cause, fair transfer, and promotion procedures. The federations also used this time to train teachers to become more visible and active in their communities through political action and public relations.

In ETFO Today ...

When FWTAO and OPSTF created ETFO, the new constitution included guaranteed executive positions for women and dedicated funding for programs for women, amounting to six percent of the annual budget. In the years since its founding, ETFO has developed strong equity and social justice programs, including women's programs, to meet its fundamental constitutional objective: "To foster a climate of social justice in Ontario and continue a leadership role in such areas as anti-poverty, non-violence and equity."¹

The programs also respect the spirit of the definition of equity adopted by the executive in October 1999:

ETFO recognizes that we live in a society characterized by individual and systemic discrimination against particular groups. Within this context ETFO defines equity as fairness achieved through proactive measures which result in equality for all."

An organization-wide consultation process led to a comprehensive policy on equity and social justice that was adopted by delegates to the 2003 Annual Meeting.²

ETFO has published award-winning curriculum documents giving classroom teachers tools to combat homophobia and other forms of bigotry and to promote healthy, equal relationships among children. ETFO programs encourage women from equity-seeking groups to become leaders in their union and to address violence against women. ETFO reaches out into the broader community by participating in CLC and OFL equity programs, supporting women's shelters across the province, and entering into partnerships with a variety of groups promoting equity and social justice.

Notes

1 ETFO constitution, Article 3, Objects, 3.4.

2 *Equity and Women's Services - 2004 Annual Report.*

The Ontario Liberal government passed the *Pay Equity Act* in 1988. It was designed to eliminate gender discrimination by comparing predominantly female job classes against predominantly male job classes on the basis of skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions. Employers were required to redress wage imbalances. Teachers lobbied for the legislation and applauded its proclamation.

Many people thought teachers would see no immediate benefit from the Act. After all, grid structures were gender neutral, weren't they? An examination of the salary differential between male and female public elementary teachers was an eye-opener. At the time the legislation came into effect, women elementary teachers were earning on average about 80 percent of what their male colleagues did. In part this occurred because there were fewer women in the higher-paying administrative jobs; it was also because women had more broken service before collective agreements provided maternity leaves and because more women taught part-time. But a significant portion of the disparity could be attributed to the prevalence of women in the non-degree categories. Only about 18 percent of public elementary teachers were in those categories, but 96 percent of them were women. At the same time, 80 percent of the non-degree teachers in the secondary panel were men, all placed in the higher paying A1 category, as secondary had no non-degree categories.

FWTAO and OPSTF worked with local bargaining committees, trustee organizations, and individual boards to collapse the non-degree categories to achieve real pay equity for the teachers in them. The final pay equity settlement was reached in 1995 after lengthy negotiations and hearings before the Pay Equity Tribunal. While most collective agreements still have a single pre-degree category, the maximum rate reflects parity with category A1. It is estimated that implementation of the pay equity plans resulted in about \$43 million in additional wages to non-degree teachers, with individual increases ranging from \$3,000 to \$13,000 per year. The impact on their pensions would last a lifetime.

The pay equity struggle demonstrates how the federations have worked over the years to ensure teachers have the full benefit of laws that could assist them, as well as protection from laws that could have negative effects.

The 1990s - Decade of Turmoil

The Social Contract

In the fall of 1990, the Liberal government was defeated by the New Democratic Party led by Bob Rae. Early in their term, in addition to legislating employment equity, they put in place improved labour laws. Amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* created better maternity and parental leave provisions, enshrining in law many of the benefits teachers had negotiated over the years.

However, in April 1993 the government announced restraint measures to curb public sector spending and reduce the province's deficit. Thus began the Social Contract. The government invited public sector unions and employers to negotiate a \$2 billion cut in the cost of public sector wages. The education portion of that cut was \$520 million.

Teacher federations joined a coalition of almost 30 public sector unions to attempt to negotiate a concerted response with the government, but negotiations were unsuccessful and the unions walked away from the table on June 3.

The government response was swift. Bill 48, *The Social Contract Act*, passed by a slim majority on July 7. It forced cost-cutting measures on public sector organizations: municipalities, school boards, hospitals, and provincial departments and agencies. If the federations failed to negotiate alternative plans, teachers would be faced with up to 12 unpaid leave days (known as Rae Days). As well, their salaries, already frozen, would be further reduced by the cancellation of all increments and category changes. Staffing reductions of 4.75 percent loomed and boards would have wide powers to impose other cost-saving measures.

Faced with these pressures, the unions, including the federations, returned to intensive negotiations with the government in July and August. By bargaining a framework agreement, and using surplus money in the teachers' pension fund to offset cuts, the federations were able to reduce the number of Rae Days teachers faced. They also retained category changes and gained the ability to negotiate the return of lost increments. Most staffing reductions were accommodated through attrition.

About 30 percent of federation members were affected by

Pension Plan

As a result of sustained pressure from the federations, teacher pensions continued to improve between 1980 and 2000. Pensions would be based on the best five years' average salary, down from seven years. Common-law and same-sex partners would qualify for survivor pensions. In 1998, the 85 factor (age plus years of service totalling 85) was introduced as a temporary measure to encourage retirements; it later became permanent.

The federations also began to demand more say in managing the plan. In April 1989, during the provincial Liberal Party convention, over 20,000 OTF members demonstrated at Cops Coliseum in Hamilton, calling for an equal teacher-government management partnership. It was achieved in 1991.

the increment freeze which, over the course of the Social Contract period, would have meant the equivalent of one year's loss of salary for some members. Teacher federations recognized that it was unfair that those teachers not earning the maximum should have to bear such a large portion of the cost reduction. They launched an aggressive bargaining campaign to restore lost increments and to place teachers in their rightful place on the grid. Although they were challenged further by the cuts made by the Conservatives when they came to power in 1995, the federations were eventually successful.

A new vision for education

Bob Rae's NDP government also sought to reform the education system. After 20 months of deliberation, research, and public hearings, in January 1995 it released *For the Love of Learning*, the 550-page report of the Royal Commission on Learning. The government response to the recommendations in the report included creation of the College of Teachers, the School Board Reduction Task Force, the Education Quality and Accountability Office and standardized testing, school councils, and much more. In June the NDP government was defeated, and it would be up to the Tories and their Common Sense Revolution to implement many of these initiatives.

Countering the Common Sense Revolution

The Mike Harris government was elected in June 1995 promising to cut taxes, slash government spending, and eliminate the provincial deficit. Once elected, it hit fast, hard, and everywhere. The government cut social services, slashed health care, rescinded labour laws and other progressive legislation, merged cities and downloaded onto them the cost of many programs such as highways, social housing, and welfare, previously paid for by the province. They made Ontario a meaner place to live.

The Tories deliberately manufactured a "crisis" in education, claiming the system was in decline, that education was costing more but producing poorer results, that boards were wasting money, and that there was too much "fat in the system." Their "cure" cut \$2 billion from the education system. While they pretended to put more money into classrooms, the cuts reduced special education programs and programs like ESL, music, physical education, and many more. Support staff were fired, libraries were closed, class sizes increased, transportation, maintenance, and capital budgets were cut. School buildings started to crumble.

The ministry introduced a radically new curriculum without providing supports, textbooks, or training. It reorganized school boards, providing little rationale for the new boundaries. It threatened to curtail collective bargaining rights. The government took the right to levy taxes away from school boards and placed education funding solely in the hands of the province.

Over their 80 years of existence, the federations had faced many challenges, but the breadth and speed of changes in education, were unprecedented. Teachers found allies in other unions,

parents, students, community activists, academics, social justice groups, and concerned citizens. Education became an important public issue.

While fighting board efforts to extract concessions from teachers at the local level, the federations also launched extensive public education programs, documenting the cuts and the harm to students. Local leaders met with their MPPs to try to influence political decisions and demonstrated outside local constituency offices when they were not invited inside.

The federations and their members participated in the Days of Action, protests held in several cities across the province to demonstrate opposition to the cuts to education, health care, and social services. In spite of the fact that over 100,000 people joined the Hamilton protest, and over 200,000 demonstrated in Toronto, the government dismissed the protesters as members of “special interest groups” who did not speak for the average citizen.

In education the conflict reached crisis proportions in the fall of 1997 with the introduction of Bill 160, the *Education Quality Improvement Act*. When discussions with the government failed to produce amendments, the federations called on their members to engage in a political protest – a 10-day walkout that shut down schools across the province. The government’s attempt to get an injunction preventing it was unsuccessful. The court ruled the teachers’ action was not an illegal strike under bargaining legislation and took no action to end the protest.

Although the protest ended without desired changes to the bill, teachers’ actions created more interest in education than ever before. People who never discussed education issues were reading all 262 pages of Bill 160; previously hostile media personalities were writing supportive articles and editorials; parent groups emerged to take up the fight for quality education; labour organizations took on education issues like never before. Even though Bill 160 passed later that fall, the actions of teachers and their supportive partners helped to prevent even deeper cuts to education.

A positive provision of the 1998 *Education Quality Improvement Act*, Bill 160, was that it made occasional teachers members of the federations.

Occasional Teachers

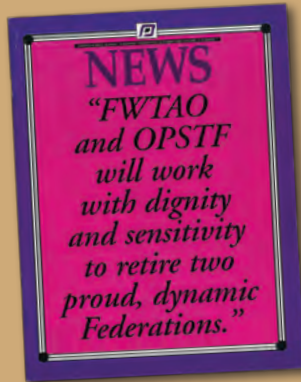
For many years the federations maintained that occasional teachers became fee-paying members of their respective federations when they had worked for 20 days. Boards accepted that interpretation until official bargaining legislation was introduced in 1975, excluding OTs from the new bargaining structures.

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union moved to organize occasional teachers under the *Ontario Labour Relations Act (OLRA)* and eventually succeeded in Toronto and Brant County. In 1984 OPSTF became the bargaining agent for Kent County OTs. They signed their first contract in 1986. OPSTF began to organize education assistants in 1990. Eventually OPSTF became the bargaining agent for approximately 16,000 occasional teachers and education assistants.¹ Most of these occasional teachers and education assistants were women.

In 1991, FWTAO launched a lawsuit on behalf of OTs who were denied the right to buy back time in the pension plan for absences following a period of occasional teaching, a right contract teachers had enjoyed for years. This was particularly punitive to women, many of whom had to take time away from teaching for maternity leave. The lawsuit took four years and ended in the Supreme Court, but ultimately succeeded in gaining millions of dollars in pension improvements for occasional teachers.

Note

- 1 Charlotte Morgan. “Happy 75th Anniversary, OPSTF,” *OPSTF News*, February 1996, p. 11.



Officers of FWTAO and OPSTF sign the agreement to create a new teacher federation, ETFO. They are (back row) Stan Korolnek, first VP, OPSTF; Joan Wescott, executive director, FWTAO; Flo Keillor, VP, FWTAO; Gene Lewis, deputy secretary, OPSTF; Sandra Gaskell, deputy executive director, FWTAO; (front row) Maret Sadem-Thompson, president, FWTAO; Phyllis Benedict, president, OPSTF; Dave Lennox, secretary, OPSTF.



OPSMTF pushes for amalgamation

The original founders of the Ontario Public School Men Teachers' Federation (OPSMTF) created a separate men's federation only after they failed to convince women elementary teachers and secondary teachers to establish one teacher organization. However, they never abandoned their goal and over the years made several overtures to FWTAO to band together into one organization. An agreement to merge the two organizations was never achieved as FWTAO believed there were issues specific to women that were better addressed in their own organization.

The 1972 OPSMTF annual meeting voted to accept women as voluntary members. In 1982 it removed the word "Men" from its name and became the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation (OPSTF).² Soon afterwards, OPSTF became the bargaining agent for Kent County occasional teachers. Eventually, OPSTF became the bargaining agent for approximately 16,000 occasional teachers and education assistants, almost all of them women.

Unsuccessful in achieving amalgamation by mutual agreement, in 1984 OPSTF voted to provide financial backing to members who challenged the OTF by-laws that assigned membership to FWTAO and OPSTF. There followed a challenge under the equality provisions of the Charter in 1985 and a charge of discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code. While the Charter challenge was dismissed, a board of inquiry was struck to hear the case under the Code. In April 1994, the one-man board of inquiry deemed the OTF by-law violated the Code and gave OTF time to make necessary adjustments.

ETFO – The federation of the future

In 1995 FWTAO launched an extensive consultation with its members about creating a new federation. With those responses in hand, FWTAO entered into negotiations with OPSTF to create a new teacher organization. Delegates to the 1997 annual meetings of the two federations approved, in principle, the constitution and bylaws of the new organization and authorized their respective officers to sign an application to incorporate the new federation. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario was created in 1998.

Some final thoughts

Throughout their histories, the federations were always ahead of their times, looking for ways to improve conditions for elementary teachers and protect and advance their rights in good and in challenging times. They also took up the cause of public education and the interests of students.

The federations could not have accomplished what they did over the decades without the involvement and commitment of individual members. And they won't make progress in the future without member involvement. ETFO is your federation. Make the most of your membership.

Notes

1. Mary Labatt, *Always a Journey*, Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1993, p. 282.
2. Charlotte Morgan, "Happy 75th Anniversary, OPSTF" in *OPSTF News*, February 1996, p. 10.

A brief history of Ontario's public elementary teachers and their federations

It's Elementary

CHAPTER FIVE

Women and the Federations

Dedication

ETFO has 73,000 members. Of these over eighty percent are women. This is true of teacher members, occasional teacher members, and our ESP/PSP members. This chapter is dedicated to you.





Harriet Johnston. *Always a Journey*. FWTAO, 1993.



Evelyn Johnson, FWTAO's first president. *Always a Journey*. FWTAO, 1993.



Professional development workshop in 1962. *Always a Journey*. FWTAO, 1993.



Little Mothers' Class, Toronto, 1919. *Speak with Their Own Voices*. FWTAO, 1987.



FWTAO's Board of Directors, 1947. *Always a Journey*. FWTAO, 1993.

In many ways, the history of women teachers reflects the struggles of all Canadian women for the right to engage in paid work outside the home and the right to stay in the workforce when married or pregnant. Equal pay, equal opportunity, equal treatment under the law, good working conditions, and safe workplaces continue to be factors in the daily lives of working women, including teachers.

The issues unique to women in the paid workforce include *biological factors*: only women get pregnant and *societal factors*: women still do more work at home including child care and elder care. Statistically women are more vulnerable to violence in the home and harassment in the workplace. They are underrepresented in positions of power and decision-making – in boardrooms, legislatures, courtrooms, and union governing bodies. Women teachers face specific *professional* issues. Women make up the majority of elementary teachers (80 percent of ETFO members). Among ETFO members, 88 percent of teacher librarians, 90 percent of ESL teachers, and 86 percent of special education teachers are women. On the other hand, according to a Statistics Canada Survey of Principals, only 53 percent of elementary school principals are women.¹

All of these issues give women's working lives a unique shape. Their acceptance in the workforce has always been linked to the economy and economic downturns can reverse their gains and dampen their progress. Whether it was the Depression of the 1930s, the spending cutbacks and teacher surpluses of the 1970s, or the cutbacks of the so-called Common Sense Revolution in the 1990s – women's jobs were affected first and most often.

Early attitudes have long-term effects

Women have made up the majority of elementary public school teachers since 1880, but their initial acceptance into teaching some 40 years earlier was the subject of controversy. Although women had been largely responsible for educating children in their homes, once education became “public” their suitability was questioned. Some said paid work was not respectable for women. Others questioned their competence: did they have the physical, intellectual, and emotional abilities to teach children, discipline students, and withstand the rigours of teaching in pioneer Canada?

The common prejudices of the time characterized women as the gentler nurturing sex, morally

Teachers and students at a rural school, 1905. *Archives of Ontario*



Looking for
classroom
materials?



Women of
Canada Kits
from
fwt
tao

The Federation of Women
Teachers' Associations of Ontario

FWTAO Women of Canada Kits.

Always a Journey. FWTAO, 1993.



At a news conference in the FWTAO office. *Always a Journey.* FWTAO, 1993.



Archives of Ontario

It's Elementary

A brief history of Ontario's public elementary teachers and their federations

superior to men perhaps, but easily overcome by their emotions and thus in need of guidance and protection. Men were the leaders, the providers, the breadwinners. At the time, this was considered natural law and although unfair to both sexes, these views resonated then and reappear in various guises to this day.

In the 1840s options for women who wanted or needed to work outside the home were limited mainly to subordinate or nurturing roles – domestic service, factory work, nursing. Egerton Ryerson and the economics of the public education system determined the roles of men and women in teaching for decades to come. Ryerson wrote in 1865 that women were “best adapted to teach small children, having, as a general rule, most heart, most tender feelings, most assiduity, and, in the order of Providence, the qualities best suited for the care, instruction and government of infancy and childhood.”² While ending the controversy over their ability to teach, Ryerson’s view confirmed the commonly held beliefs about the nature of women and isolated them as teachers of the youngest children.

Moreover, since teachers of younger children were paid less, boards could save money by hiring young women for primary classes while offering higher salaries to men teaching higher grades. When men married they received bonuses or promotions; when women married they were told to go home. Their limited time in the workforce meant women accrued fewer increments, exercised less influence, and had fewer opportunities for advancement.

Why did women work for less?

- Women had few opportunities to work outside the home. They could become seamstresses, domestics, factory workers, nurses, or teachers.
- Once married, women were not allowed to remain in teaching. They were not considered true professionals and were sometimes called “trousseau teachers” because the few short years between school and marriage gave them limited experience.
- Requirements for women teachers were lower than men’s, reinforcing the notion of lower pay.
- Women were hired for the younger grades because it was thought they lacked the ability to discipline older children. Teaching young children was thought to be a motherly role not a scholarly one. It was undervalued and salaries were lower.

Contract of Miss Lottie Jones

Around the first decade of the twentieth century, Miss Lottie Jones was offered a job in Ontario at \$75 per quarter or three hundred for the year. In return she agreed to sign a contract stipulating that she would:

- not get married
- not ride in a carriage or automobile with any man except her brothers or father
- not leave town without permission
- not smoke cigarettes or drink beer, wine or whiskey
- not dye her hair or dress in bright colours, wear at least two petticoats
- keep the school room clean, scrub it with soap and water at least once a week
- not use face powder, mascara or paint her lips
- not wear dresses more than 2” above the ankles, and finally
- not loiter downtown in ice cream parlours

Source:

Staton, Pat and Beth Light. 1987. *Speak with Their Own Voices*. Toronto. FWTAO. p.23.

Peel Elementary Teachers' Strike, 1979.

At left, author Barbara Richter. FWTAO

photo.



Peel Elementary Teachers' Strike, 1979. FWTAO photo.



Opportunity for Choice, 1985. *Speak*

with *Their Own Voices*. FWTAO, 1987.



Feminism's first wave – women teachers begin to organize!

Increased immigration, industrialization, and urbanization brought changes to Canada's social structure in the latter half of the 19th century. Business and labour organizations grew. Women also started to organize. These early groups were largely made up of middle class or “club women” who came together to do missionary or charitable work for their churches. The early church clubs gave women the opportunity to do respectable work outside the home, form alliances, and develop their organizing skills. The clubs gradually evolved into cultural groups and eventually women organized around broader social issues such as temperance and prohibition, poverty, child labour, prison reform, female unemployment and training, contract and property rights, and women's suffrage.

The ‘first wave’ of feminism, the suffrage movement, helped open the doors to universities and the professions, and resulted in women winning the right to vote in 1918. These early feminists believed that the right to vote would give women true equality and create a better society for all. Over the next century, it would become clear that equality was not so easy to achieve.

Women elementary teachers belonged to these groups and movements and, having honed their skills, began organizing in their own right. In 1888 eight women formed the Lady Teachers' Association of Toronto, later called the Women Teachers' Association (WTA) of Toronto. The group's aims were “the social and mutual benefit of its members, the advancement of the interests of the Toronto lady teachers and the profession generally.”³ The WTA established a sick leave fund and worked for better salaries. Women teachers in London, Galt, Ottawa, Peterborough, Hamilton, Chatham, Port Arthur, St. Thomas, North Bay, and Prescott formed similar associations.

On April 3, 1918, representatives from women's teacher groups across the province came together in Room 65 of the East Hall of the University of Toronto and formed the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO). The first teacher federation in Ontario, it aimed “to promote the professional and financial status of women teachers.” One paper delivered at the meeting asked “Why Are Women with the Same Training as Men Relegated to the Less Remunerative Positions?” By the time the meeting ended members were protesting their second place status and demanding decent minimum salaries. The fight for equal pay and equal treatment was launched.

Early Militancy

In the first year of its existence more than one third of women elementary teachers – 4,236 out of a total of 11,359 – joined FWTAO.

Buoyed by the successes of the suffragettes, members took their task of improving salaries seriously. In 1919 they set \$650 as the minimum salary and urged their colleagues not to undercut others by accepting lower pay. They believed salary levels should increase with experience, and worked to put women's issues before school trustees and other decision-making bodies.

Belying the image of the demure, self-sacrificing school mar'm, many of these women expressed a militancy not unlike that of their labour union/movement counterparts. In 1922 when women teachers in Owen Sound threatened a strike, the board increased their maximum salary to \$1200.⁴ But not all women teachers were as successful, and many who called for higher pay met opposition not only from their boards but also from their male colleagues who claimed they deserved higher salaries because they taught older students, coached sports, and had families to support.

This latter notion was based on dubious logic. Men with no dependents also received higher pay. Moreover, studies have shown that many women, although single, were supporting the family farm, elderly or disabled relatives, or younger siblings.

The women's early successes, in combination with a growing anti-union sentiment in the country, created a backlash. There was still general ambivalence about women doing paid work,

and those who demanded better salaries were suspect. They didn't fit with society's expectations that women be models of silent self-sacrifice. Newspaper editorialists who had once been supportive now called these women teachers radicals and socialists.⁵ Even former allies in the suffrage movement thought their teacher sisters were going too far. These criticisms dampened the spirits of those teachers who, without job security, felt they were putting their jobs at risk if they were too vocal in demanding decent pay.

These attitudes, a post-war recession, and the 1929 stock market crash reversed many early successes. During hard economic times women were rebuked for wanting more pay and, at the same time, made to feel guilty for having jobs at all when so many men were unemployed. Although both men and women teachers faced hard times during this period, women bore the brunt of society's disapproval.

Between 1930 and 1936 the pay of male teachers was cut by about 38 percent while the already lower salaries of women were cut by 55 percent. Women also experienced more job losses.⁶ In 1939 there were 1,486 more men teaching than 10 years earlier but 1,303 fewer women, a trend that would reoccur when enrolments declined in the 1970s.⁷

When the economy began to improve at the end of the 1930s Canada entered World War II. Once more women teachers set aside action on their goals in deference to national priorities.

Letter in Woman's Century

Just to emphasize the importance of union and to grasp the hugeness of its strength, consider the following supposition. Supposing on the 12th day of April this year I remained at home. The pupils would loiter about for a time, go home, a few wondering remarks would be passed as to where the teacher was. There it would end. On the other hand, supposing we all, ten thousand women teachers remained at home on that self-same day and declared our intentions of remaining at home until we were granted a few requests. I am not even saying that such will be the case. But aren't we justified? Wouldn't it cause a howling sensation? Wouldn't the next day's papers be filled with startling red headlines? Wouldn't the telephones buzz? Then why not stand together? Our success depends upon our numbers and I trust that we shall be able to awaken public opinion to such an extent that substantial justice may be had in the very near future.

Yours for the cause,
Miss Adelaide McGuiness
President, South Wellington W.T.A.
Fergus, Feb. 5th, 1920

Source:

Staton, Pat and Beth Light. 1989. *Speak with Their Own Voices*. Toronto. FWTAO. p.71.

Work and marriage

WW II changed the attitudes to “women’s” work. As men joined the military, first single women, then married women, then married women with children, did their patriotic duty and entered the labour force to ensure the continued success of the economy and the prosecution of the war. Government posters carried slogans like “Roll Up Your Sleeves for VICTORY!” and “Women! Back Them Up – To Bring Them Back” to get women into factories, fields, businesses, and public schools.⁸ The federal government provided tax breaks for married women and subsidized daycare centres for working mothers. In 1939 there were 639,000 women in the labour force in Canada. By 1944 they numbered 1,077,000.⁹

In working, women learned new skills and gained confidence doing jobs once closed to them. They enjoyed their newfound financial independence. Contrary to popular belief, they could do paid work and still be good mothers. But neither government nor industry – and certainly not school boards – thought they were bringing married women into the workforce permanently.

In Ontario between 1940 and 1943, 1,782 married women returned to elementary schools,¹⁰ but they were treated differently from the regular staff. The Windsor Board, for example, made fine distinctions; a woman married to a service man was retained and paid on the regular grid, but a woman married to a civilian was “rehired” on “the schedule for temporary married women.” The board’s rationale was that “teachers who get married in the middle of the term and have

Women Teachers and Age Discrimination

Women who stayed in teaching faced many barriers. One of these was age discrimination. Women were forced to retire at age 62 but men could continue teaching to age 65. Some boards refused to hire women over the age of 35 because they didn’t think they would be energetic enough to teach. Federation counselling files were filled with stories of women who were terminated because the board could find a younger, usually male, teacher to replace her. One woman received a termination letter because the board thought she was too old to supervise sports even though she had requested age-appropriate sports equipment for the young children she taught. The principal had ignored her request but purchased sports equipment for the intermediate grades.

One of the most blatant examples of age discrimination was in postings to schools on DND bases overseas. The Department of National Defense accepted women teachers to the age of 40 but accepted men to age 60. When FWTAO requested the rationale, the Associate Minister of National Defense responded that the majority of officers on the bases were “in the younger age group” and base activities catered to younger people. Older women would feel alienated and left out resulting in them “becoming chronic critics.” Older single men could cope because “For obvious reasons the unmarried male teacher can cope with this situation infinitely better than the older female since he can move around either on the base or in the economy by himself without attracting the criticism or the attention that this freedom would arouse when and if an older female would dare to exercise it.”

It wasn’t until the 1966 *Age Discrimination Act* that employers were prohibited from firing or refusing to promote someone on the basis of age defined as 40 to 65.

Women doing war work in Marelco factory. 1940.

Archives of Ontario



Women working at the General Engineering

Company munitions factory. 1943. *Archives of Ontario*

During the war years married women were encouraged to join the war effort and return to work. Industry and the federal government provided many incentives including day care. But the post-war cancellation of federal subsidies to day cares signaled that married women were no longer welcome in the workforce.



Woman TTC driver, Sunnyside, WWII. 1940. *Archives of Ontario*



Children at a war time nursery at the General Engineering Company munitions factory. 1943. *Archives*

of Ontario



the added duties of setting up housekeeping are not able to give the same service as before the marriage especially for extra-curricular duties.”¹¹

When the war ended and the men returned, women who had built airplanes, harvested crops, driven streetcars, run businesses, and taught school, went home – either willingly or as a result of layoffs. The federal government cancelled childcare subsidies and barred married women from the civil service. Just as it had been their patriotic duty to enter the workforce during the war, it was now women’s duty to return to marriage and homemaking. In advertising, the images of Rosy the Riveter turned into pictures of women using the latest cleaning products and home appliances while wearing dresses, aprons, high heels, and smiles on their faces.

Unlike many of their working sisters, married women teachers benefitted from the post-war baby boom, which created a teacher shortage. By 1951 some 28 percent of women teachers were married compared to five percent 10 years earlier. A few years later married women were the majority.¹²

For FWTAO the subject of married women in teaching had been an issue as early as 1932, the height of the Depression, when the annual meeting decided that boards should give preference to single women unless married women were the sole breadwinners in their families. They reversed that position the following year. In 1953, when more and more married women were teaching, FWTAO took the position to the Ontario Teachers’ Federation (see chapter 3) that married women be hired on the same basis as single women. Considering that married women were barred from the federal civil service until 1955, this was a progressive position.

Work and pregnancy

Today when maternity wear is a fashion industry and pregnant women continue in their jobs until they choose to take a leave it is hard to imagine the mores of 1950. Skyrocketing birthrates were the very reason children filled elementary schools, but board administrators considered the sight of a pregnant teacher in a classroom scandalous. Most boards required women to resign when they became pregnant. Some administrators argued it was too dangerous for a pregnant woman to continue working; the board couldn’t be responsible for a woman in a “delicate condition.” Those boards that did allow pregnant women to continue to work, forced them to leave when their pregnancies were apparent. In one case the principal relocated the primary class of an obviously pregnant teacher to the school basement so fewer people would see her.

Women with children faced many barriers when they wanted to return to work. An administrator who believed a mother should be at home with her children could stop her return to work. Those who did get jobs were rehired at the bottom of the scale or were offered part-time positions with little chance of full-time work. Many boards that did provide maternity leave, would only reinstate a woman if a position was available.

Although statutory bargaining rights were years away, FWTAO took maternity leave to the

In ETFO Today ...

ETFO continues to advocate for parents. The federation is still fighting for adequate and accessible child care and works with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada to lobby for a national child care program. During Campaign 200, the bargaining campaign for the 2004-2008 collective agreements, ETFO successfully negotiated improvements to paid leave plans and salary top-up during parental leaves, leaves for family medical care and compassionate care, and protection against communicable diseases, such as Fifth Disease. Improved parental leaves continue to be a priority.

bargaining table, proposing a modest plan with provisions for a leave, the right to return to work, and reinstatement at the same pay level with increment and seniority. By the end of the 1960s as the birthrate dropped, boards were facing declining enrolments and it became more urgent to secure these rights. The federation published the names of boards with and without adequate maternity leave in its publications.

It also lobbied the provincial government to address maternity leave and in December 1970 the *Women's Equal Opportunity Act* was enacted. It provided for a statutory maternity leave of 17 weeks and barred discrimination on the basis of sex or marital status in hiring, firing, training, and promotion. Despite the legislative guarantees, the fight was hardly over as school boards attempted to circumvent the legislation and tried to pressure women into giving up their legal rights to leaves and guarantees of return to work.

The second wave of feminism

The 1960s and 1970s saw a resurgence in feminism – often called the second wave. The suffragists believed that once women had the right to vote they would have true equality. They were mistaken; equality in law does not by itself result in substantive equality. In spite of laws governing equal pay, non-discrimination, and pregnancy leave women still faced systemic discrimination – attitudes, structures, and practices that created barriers to their equal participation in the workforce and in society. Women's groups formed across the country. With more access to education than their mothers had, women in the 1960s were graduating from universities with new views about family and career. The contraceptive pill became available in 1960 and, although prescribing or distributing information about contraception was illegal in Canada until 1969, the pill gave women the freedom to control their childbearing and to plan their lives around education, career, and family instead of just family.

One focus of women's organizing in Canada was the creation of a royal commission to investigate the status of women. With women's rights activist Laura Sabia in the lead, women's groups joined together to call on the federal government to investigate the factors contributing to women's inequality. FWTAO, one of the largest, best organized, and well-resourced women's groups in the country, joined in the effort. Lester Pearson appointed the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada in 1967. The commission reported in 1970 and made recommendations about education and training, maternity leave, birth control and abortion, improved pensions, women's shelters, child care, family law reform, affirmative action to redress

the effects of previous discrimination, employment rights for women, and much more. The report made it clear that creating true equality for women required a host of changes.

In the years following the publication of the report many areas of opportunity opened up for women.

- The government created a federal department, Status of Women Canada, and funded the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
- The Ontario Medical Association elected its first woman president, Dr. Bette Stephenson, who later became the first woman to serve as Minister of Education in Ontario.
- Girls were appointed for the first time to work as pages in the Ontario legislature.
- Rape crisis centres and shelters for battered women opened in Toronto and Vancouver.
- The first women's studies program was started at the University of Toronto. Simon Fraser University hired the first woman president of a Canadian co-educational university.
- The charter airline, Transair, hired the first woman jet pilot in North America.¹³

Women's equality issues, including their portrayal in the media, the limited employment and promotion opportunities, sexual harassment in the workplace, violence in the home and in society, and sexual exploitation, were in the forefront of public discourse.

Women in education

Women elementary teachers, while facing many challenges in their employment, generally found their conditions to be better than those of other women workers studied by the Royal Commission. More than 50 years of action by their federation had given them employment rights, rights for married women, pregnancy leave, and a measure of job security that other women in the paid labour force did not have. But like most women in this period, women teachers experienced a new militancy. New bargaining legislation gave them added clout to negotiate improved rights for women into legally binding collective agreements. FWTAO began to talk about sexual harassment, protection from discrimination, improved working conditions, paid pregnancy and parental leaves, and equal treatment for women in obtaining positions and promotions.

Within its own sphere of influence the federation began to look at women's equality, examining how curriculum materials reinforced outmoded gender stereotypes. Several studies in the 1970s found that elementary texts and curriculum materials depicted girls and women in submissive and subordinate roles while men and boys were portrayed as powerful and action-oriented.

From bright beginnings to harsh realities

Just as many of the gains women teachers made in the first half of the century were reversed by hard economic times, in the 1970s the new generation of women teachers found their progress impeded by ceilings on school board expenditures, federal government wage and price controls,

and a decade-long period of declining enrolment.

When the economic expansion of the 1960s ended the provincial government imposed ceilings on school board budgets. The boards responded by making deep cuts, many disproportionately affecting women and young children. They attempted to replace junior kindergarten teachers with early childhood education graduates. They increased primary class sizes and introduced teaching assistants to handle the increased workload. Special education and ESL programs were slashed and boards closed libraries or replaced teacher-librarians with library technicians. These were all areas where the majority of teachers were women.

Boards also began twinning schools putting one principal in charge of administering two or more schools. Women who were principals of smaller schools lost their positions when their schools were twinned with larger schools where principals tended to be men. This development also reduced opportunities for promotion at a time when women were beginning to demand equal access to these positions.

Teacher federations had been bargaining with boards for decades; however, in 1975, new legislation gave federations the legal right to bargain collectively with boards. Teachers had been making great strides in obtaining salary improvements, winning significant double digit settlements to bring their salaries in line with those of other professional groups. In October 1975 the federal government imposed wage and price controls. Many of the gains were rolled back and federation efforts diverted from their own issues to fighting to maintain the status quo.

In the 1970s enrolments declined steeply resulting in an estimated loss of 5,500 elementary

Poverty in Retirement

Early pension plans for teachers were woefully inadequate for both men and women but because of their lower salaries, shorter time in the work force, and more interrupted service, women faced much lower pensions. In 1917 the Ontario government passed the *Teachers' Superannuation Act*. Teachers needed 40 years of service to receive an unreduced pension based on the best 15 years of earnings. The maximum pension was \$1,000.

In 1924 the Superannuation Commission reported there were 547 retired teachers on pension. The average pension for a woman after 40 years of service was \$416.70 but for a man it was \$592.55. In 1966 FWTAO called attention to the plight of the many women teachers who were living in poverty on meagre pensions. There were 481 women teachers in the plan whose pensions were below \$850. FWTAO distributed cheques totaling \$100,000 to these women and called on the government to increase distressingly low pensions. The government responded to this public exposure by improving pensions for all teachers the following year.

Early attempts to provide a death benefit for "widows" of plan members were resisted by the women teachers because they would pay a higher premium for a provision they couldn't access because they were generally not allowed to work once they had a spouse. The plan was amended in 1949 to include survivor pensions but the spouse of a female teacher could request a spousal allowance only if he could prove he was physically disabled and unable to work. It wasn't until 1971 that widowers could receive survivor benefits on the same basis as widows.

teaching positions. Incumbent teachers faced layoffs, while new graduates could not find work. Although some boards tried to use the principle of last in/first out, few had adequate and objective criteria for identifying which teachers would be declared redundant. Many boards left these decisions to school administrators.

Old biases reappeared. Women who had been forced to resign before statutory maternity leave was enacted could not find work. Women who had accepted part-time assignments had no hope of gaining full-time work. Married women were pressured to reduce their hours, to resign, or to retire early to make jobs available for others. Women were identified as surplus to system needs in greater numbers than their male colleagues. One board had 53 teachers on its redundancy list – all women. In another list of 200 redundant teachers, women outnumbered men by 9 to 1. At the beginning of the decade 75 percent of elementary teachers were women; by 1980 it was 66.5 percent.¹⁴

It was the federations' bargaining rights that made this period of job loss different from earlier ones. They could negotiate objective criteria for determining teacher surplus as well as alternatives to firing teachers, the school boards' response to declining enrolment.

The seniority provisions the federations negotiated recognized the broken service of women forced to leave their jobs because of marriage or pregnancy. To prevent firings, the federations negotiated more flexible voluntary extended leave plans, job-sharing arrangements, deferred salary leaves, and early retirement incentives. To encourage more flexible part-time assignments they advocated full seniority for part-time work as well as guarantees of return to full-time work. Teachers continue to enjoy many of these provisions in current collective agreements.

Equal opportunity

School boards had dismal track records in promoting women. The number of women principals had declined after the 1969 school board consolidations from 26 percent in 1967 (many of them in very small schools) to eight percent in 1973. Of 3,000 elementary schools in Ontario, only 220 had women principals.¹⁵

There were many reasons for this imbalance. It reflected historical biases towards women. People still questioned whether women had the ability to lead or to discipline. Would men – or women for that matter – accept a woman's authority? Boards went to great lengths to avoid appointing women principals. In one instance, a woman who had been asked to become principal found that when school opened in September the board had hired instead a 17-year-old boy whose only teaching credential was a six-week summer course. Another board threatened to

Wage Controls - 1975

Wage and price controls - the first imposed in Canada in peacetime - applied to the public sector and to private companies with 500 or more employees. Meant to control double-digit inflation rates, they controlled wages more effectively than prices, limiting the increases of some 4 million Canadian workers to 10, 8 and 6 percent in each of three years. Controls were phased out in 1978. FWTAO and OPSTMF helped local negotiators get strong collective agreements, and helped them formulate arguments when they appeared at the Wage and Price Control Tribunal.

replace a woman principal after expanding the school by one classroom, which they thought made it more appropriate for a male administrator.¹⁶ One woman principal, new to a school, overheard a student remark, “We used to have a principal, but now we have a woman.”

Some boards did not advertise positions but tapped potential candidates on the shoulder. The predominantly male administration tended to tap more men than women. Women also had more difficulty getting into the principal’s course – a new requirement for the position following consolidation. At first the course was filled with incumbents who needed it to keep their jobs and so women who had lost their principalships in consolidation could not get in. In later years a candidate needed the board’s endorsement, given far more often to men than to women, until that restriction was removed in 1980. Intermediate experience was considered necessary for promotion but women were traditionally underrepresented in those grades. Between 1972 and 1977 boards hired 482 more men for intermediate grades and displaced 2,535 women from those positions.¹⁷ Women candidates were asked about their plans for marriage and pregnancy, arrangements for child care, and home responsibilities.

Women themselves identified the nature of the job as a barrier. With long hours and many evening meetings, the job was structured around the lives of single people or those with spouses to take care of family needs. Many women, bearing a greater burden of family and home care responsibilities, thought they didn’t have the freedom to take on yet more responsibility.¹⁸ Some who aspired to leadership positions made the conscious decision not to have children so they could pursue promotion.

In 1973 the Ontario government adopted an internal affirmative action plan and urged school boards to provide equal opportunity for women in administrative positions. While FWTAO welcomed this initiative it had long been working to improve women’s opportunities. For decades, it had encouraged women to finish their university degrees and offered bursaries and scholarships to support them. The federation had surveyed members and heard that women were interested in promotion, but rarely received encouragement to apply and were isolated from the networks of potential candidates. In 1969 the federation created both a network and a training ground for women when it launched the Leadership Course, a year-long intensive program. By 1971 graduates of the course were being promoted. The federation also lobbied the ministry to lift the entrance restrictions from the principal’s course, opening the way for many more women to apply.

By 1979, statistics showed women had lost ground and held

In ETFO Today ...

Principals and vice-principals are no longer members of the federation. Nevertheless, ETFO continues to provide training for members interested in becoming administrators. Building on programs established by FWTAO and OPSTF, the ETFO Principal’s Qualification Program is widely recognized. Offered in conjunction with boards of education, the program provides candidates with training in collective agreements, grievances, supervision/evaluation of teachers, role of principal, duty to accommodate, human rights complaints, and College of Teachers investigations. Including this type of practical content in the curriculum is one way the ETFO program is distinct.

In 2007-2008 over 100 members, 75 percent of them women, participated in the program.

only seven percent of the principal positions. Delegates to the 1980 FWTAO annual meeting voted to make equal opportunity for women the organization's foremost goal and to work to establish affirmative action policies and programs in every school board.

FWTAO developed resources, held workshops and training sessions, and worked with local women teachers' associations, school boards, and the ministry of education to identify barriers, provide education and training, establish unbiased promotion criteria and interview procedures, set goals and timetables, and create a system of accountability. By 1996, women who made up three-fourths of elementary staff, held 60.4 percent of the vice-principal and 42 percent of the principal positions.¹⁹

Equal pay...equal value

All elementary teachers worked very hard to improve society's perception of them as professionals and they believed that decent salaries were a manifestation of professionalism. Many thought that women's lower salaries and interrupted careers diminished the image of all teachers.

The teacher federations supported a pay scale based on qualifications and experience, not on grade taught. FWTAO had taken the concept of equal pay to OTF in 1946 but the debate lasted nearly a year. OTF eventually passed the policy and in 1951 Ontario passed *The Fair Remuneration for Female Employees Act* – the first equal pay legislation in the country. Inequities were deeply embedded, however, and not completely eradicated until the mid-1960s.

In the 1970s women began to think beyond the idea of equal pay in favour of equal pay for work of equal value, or pay equity. In spite of legislation, unions, and collective agreements, women working full time in the paid labour force were still making, on average, significantly less than their male counterparts. Work done predominantly by women was paid at a lower rate than that done by men, even when they had the same employer.

In 1976 the Pay Equity Coalition was formed to lobby for a change in the law to eliminate this injustice. Women teachers, eager to help their sisters in the rest of the workforce, joined the coalition as did other federations. More than a decade of work resulted in the 1988 *Ontario Pay Equity Act*. The Act provided a way to compare the work of men and women on the basis of skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions. Women teachers celebrated on behalf of their sisters in the rest of the workforce whose average wages in 1987 were 64 percent of men's.

The requirement for a university degree

Ontario had made a university degree a pre-requisite for elementary teaching in 1972. Many women who began teaching before this had a difficult time breaking into the degree categories. When they were growing up young women were not expected to remain in the workforce once they married and cash-strapped families with difficult choices to make were often reluctant to pay for university. Getting scholarships was also more difficult. University courses could be difficult

to access unless working teachers lived near a university. As late as the 1970s teachers in North Bay were driving to attend evening classes at OISE – a four-hour trip each way. A university degree could take 10 to 15 years to achieve attending night school, summer, or correspondence courses.

Many women took advantage of professional development opportunities closer to home and opted for ministry courses they could apply immediately to classroom practices. Many had 15 or more ministry courses but when a degree requirement came into effect these courses didn't count for entry into the higher pay categories.

Married women teachers faced other barriers. Some worked to put husbands through school, or were also raising young families. In more traditional families it was considered inappropriate for a wife to have more education than her husband.

Because of these historical, cultural, financial, and practical factors many more women than men remained in the pre-degree categories. Both elementary federations worked to eradicate this imbalance and negotiated with school boards to collapse the non-degree categories into a single pay grade with a maximum comparable to the first degree category. This resulted in individual salary improvements of between \$3,000 and \$13,000 per year and lifetime improvements to pensions. By the time the last pay equity agreement was concluded, the estimated total salary payout was about \$43 million.

The federations learned that they could never be complacent that collective agreements would remain gender neutral. The factors that contributed to making the working lives of women unique had long-term consequences no one had anticipated. Even contract clauses like the salary grid – considered sacred – needed periodic review.

Are “Women’s Issues” still an issue?

The issues that women in the teaching profession faced in the past are all too familiar today. When the Mike Harris government swept to power in 1995, the cancellation of junior kindergarten was one of the first major funding cuts in education. Primary class size grants and French as a Second Language funding for primary classes were cancelled. Primary class sizes increased. Once again young children and the work done primarily by women were among the first targeted.

The failure of student focused funding to recognize increments for part-time teachers affected women teachers almost exclusively. ETFO worked to have that inequity removed from the funding formula so that the work of part-time teachers was properly recognized.

When the federal government changed the qualifying period for employment insurance in the 1990s, many part-time teachers were denied maternity benefits. ETFO continues to work with teachers to ensure access to these benefits.

Despite legislation, pregnancy still negatively affects the careers of women. Although the law guarantees leaves, a woman teacher incurs a financial penalty for the period of statutory pregnancy leave. Employment Insurance does not replace full salary and supplemental benefit plans fall short

of the mark. Although ETFO was successful in negotiating improvements to paid leaves in the 2004-2008 round of collective bargaining, only six collective agreements provided any salary top up beyond the initial eight weeks of a pregnancy leave and these still fall short of pre-leave income. Paid pregnancy, adoption, and parental leaves continue to be bargaining priorities for ETFO.

The recent census confirmed that while patterns are slowly changing, women still bear most of the responsibility for home care, child care, and elder care responsibilities. The historic constraints that disadvantaged women teachers over 100 years ago continue. Their federations have gone some way to overcoming that disadvantage, but more needs to be done.

Elementary education is underfunded compared with secondary education. Is that because, as some have argued, work with young children is women's work and therefore, less valuable? ETFO argues an emphatic no. But until the funding is equal, every student and every teacher in elementary schools are undervalued.

Women's participation in activities outside work and outside the home is still limited. Providing opportunities for this participation is necessary if women are to achieve true equality.

Political power is still held predominantly by men. Only 20 percent of Canadian legislators are women. Political power determines government priorities and government spending.

Will men benefit from advances in women's issues? Absolutely! Improving opportunities for women also gives men more options – to teach in primary grades, to work part-time, to have paid parental leave, to improve work/life balance, and much more. Improved working conditions for women teachers are improved working conditions for the men who work beside them.

The ways we organize (market and family) work disadvantages men as well as women; the fact that women's disadvantage is called "discrimination" is not inconsistent with saying that men are also ill-served by current gender arrangements. Early feminist theories were right to stress that gender roles constrict the potential of men as well as women, for if conventional femininities marginalize and disempower women, conventional masculinities make it difficult for men to engage fully in family life and trap them in a "gray life of hard labour."²⁰

ETFO has committed itself to working for equality for all its members. And 80 percent of its members are women. But no union, no federation, can achieve its goals without the active participation of its members. This history tells you about the past. The future is up to you.

Notes

- 1 Statistics Canada. 2006. A profile of elementary and secondary school principals in Canada: First results from the 2004-2005 Survey of Principals.
- 2 Prentice, Allison. 1977. "The Feminization of Teaching" in *The Neglected Majority*, ed. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Allison Prentice. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart. p. 54
- 3 Labatt, Mary. 1993. *Always a Journey*. Toronto. Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, p. 8.
- 4 French, Doris. 1968. *High Button Boot Straps*. Toronto. Ryerson Press, p. 43.
- 5 Labatt, Mary. op.cit. p. 22.
- 6 Staton, Pat and Beth Light. 1987. *Speak with Their Own Voices*. Toronto: Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario. p. 100.
- 7 Reynolds, Cecilia and Harry Smaller. 1996. "Economic Downturns Affect Women and Men Differently" in *FWTAO Newsletter*. p. 51.
- 8 Pierson, Ruth. 1977. "Women's Emancipation and the Recruitment of Women into the Labour Force in World War II," in Trofimenkoff, and Prentice, p.135.
- 9 Pierson, p.145.
- 10 Gaskell, Sandra. 1989. "The Problems and Professionalism of Women Elementary Teachers in Ontario, 1944-1954." Doctor of Education thesis. Toronto. OISE/University of Toronto. p.22.
- 11 Gaskell, p.196.
- 12 Gaskell, p.33.
- 13 Labatt, pp.162-163.
- 14 FWTAO. *Affirmative Action Reports*.
- 15 Labatt, p.206.
- 16 Gaskell, pp.69-70.
- 17 Labatt, pp.235-238.
- 18 "Go For It!" *Barriers to Women's Promotion in Education*. 1991. Research Project for the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario. p.11.
- 19 FWTAO. 1998. *Affirmative Action Report*. p.3.
- 20 Williams, Joan. 2000. *Unbending Gender: Why Family and Work Conflict and What To Do About It*. New York. Oxford University Press. p.271.

It's Elementary

A brief history of Ontario's public elementary teachers and their federations



480 University Avenue

Suite 1000

Toronto, Ontario

M5G 1V2

P: 416-962-3836

Toll free: 1-888-838-3836

F: 416-642-2424

www.etfo.ca