

# Open Letter to Delegates Ontario Liberal Party Annual General Meeting October 15 – 17, 2010

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**Sam Hammond, President  
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario**

This weekend's meeting provides the opportunity to discuss key issues as the party prepares its platform and strategy for the 2011 election.

## **Positive Elementary Initiatives**

The Liberal government has introduced a number of positive education policies since taking office in 2003, including smaller primary classes and full-day kindergarten.

Ontario-based research demonstrates that smaller primary classes enable teachers to provide more individual attention to students and use a greater variety of instructional strategies. Smaller classes contribute to improved student behaviour and peer relationships. All these outcomes lead to improved student success.

The new full-day kindergarten programs launched this September establish Ontario as a global leader in early childhood education. ETFO supports the long-term vision of using schools to extend programs that support children's development and give parents greater opportunity to participate fully in the workforce or pursue further education.

## **ETFO's Election Platform**

ETFO has launched an election platform, entitled *Building Better Schools*.

The ETFO platform focuses on five building blocks for improved education for *all* Ontario students:

- more meaningful student assessment;
- greater access to specialist teachers;
- small classes for all elementary students;

- more resources for special needs students; and
- greater focus on equal opportunity and inclusion.



## **Importance of Free Collective Bargaining**

If the Liberal government hopes to continue to secure labour peace in the education sector, it must respect free collective bargaining.

The right to free and fair collective bargaining is protected under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and our provincial labour laws. ETFO believes that local collective bargaining has served educators and school boards

well over the past several decades. The actual parties to a collective agreement – the employer and the union which represents its employees – are best positioned to understand the realities of any given workplace.

The system has served the public as well. Historically, the incidence of educators' withdrawing services because of a labour dispute is extremely low. Local collective bargaining has meant that educators and employers alike have a direct stake in what happens at the negotiating table. It is critical to creating school systems that function in the best interests of all stakeholders.

As the province works through its current economic challenges, ETFO cautions against any policy that would violate the collective bargaining rights of teachers and other public sector workers. Bargaining in both the public and private sector is affected by the economic context. The government should let the natural pressures on bargaining take their course. ETFO will be assessing all parties' policies and commitments regarding free collective bargaining as we move towards the 2011 election.



**Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario**