

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

It's Elementary

CHAPTER ONE

ETFO'S SECOND DECADE 2009 to 2018
A Struggle Against Austerity and
Attack on Democratic Rights



Photo: Anne de Haas

INTRODUCTION

Conflict and tumult characterized much of ETFO's second decade compared to its more harmonious relationship with the government when the Liberals took the reins in 2003. After the Liberals won their third term in 2011, their relationship with education unions began to change. What had been a constructive working relationship between ETFO and the government, abruptly transformed to become a high-stakes political struggle.

A number of factors contributed to the changing political landscape. In late 2008, the effects of the stock market crash that spawned a global recession hit the province hard. Ontario lost thousands of manufacturing jobs, most of which were well-paid union jobs. This led to high unemployment rates, a hollowing out of the province's middle class and a significant drop in provincial tax revenue. It also contributed to changing attitudes towards unions. With unionized workers in the minority, their benefits were no longer viewed as a benchmark for other workers to strive for; those who were struggling financially and didn't have similar benefits objected to their taxes paying for union members' "perks." This economic backdrop and the changing attitudes towards unions set the table for the Liberal government's austerity agenda and attack on education sector collective agreements.

Declining enrolment, an increased centralization of education authority and the parallel decline in the role of school boards shaped ETFO's second decade. Although school boards initially received funding to mitigate the effects of declining enrolment, by 2015-16, school boards had lost that funding cushion and faced closing schools, particularly in rural communities. The increased centralized control meant that ETFO focused the majority of its efforts to improve school learning and working conditions at the provincial level.

The introduction of full-day Kindergarten, the single-most significant education initiative of the period, was the focus of considerable ETFO lobbying efforts regarding the staffing



model and program philosophy. It also led to welcoming new members into the union family; ETFO spent the spring of 2010 organizing early childhood educators (ECEs) who were part of the new Kindergarten educator team.

Workload and workplace stress had been issues ETFO had worked to address during its first 10 years. In the Federation's second decade, members increasingly looked to their union to deal with the growing incidence of student violence. By the close of the decade, issues related to classroom violence had become the focus of a major ETFO campaign and lobbying effort.

Throughout the last 10 years, ETFO has continued to expand its equity and social justice work, introducing a number of new programs and resources and leading the way by pushing the boundaries of equity work with programs and workshops such as White Privilege and Welcoming Newcomers. Professional development programs have expanded and evolved in response to changing classroom needs and technological innovation. Throughout the decade, ETFO has established itself as a leader in delivering Additional Qualification courses for teachers.

The Federation has also increased its involvement in the labour movement and undertaken a number of community engagement initiatives designed to foster broader public support for public education and its policy and social justice goals. Working with locals to financially support women's and social justice organizations, sister unions' strike efforts, and respond to disaster relief efforts continued to be important Federation work during this period. A wonderful testament to ETFO's commitment to the environment is the Federation's new office building that opened its doors in early June 2013 and lays claim to being the first LEED Platinum building in the City of Toronto.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN CHANGES EDUCATION LANDSCAPE AND ETFO

Former Premier Dalton McGuinty hitched his political wagon to education issues and, until his 2012 confrontation with education unions, coveted the moniker of "education premier." The Liberals ran on an education platform in 2003; the signature policy was smaller primary class size, a policy long advocated for by ETFO and its predecessor organizations. The Liberals phased in a primary class size cap during their first term in office. Their 2003 platform also committed to introducing full-day Kindergarten, but following the election, the new government used federal Early Learning and Child Care funding to expand subsidies for licensed child care for Kindergarten-aged children. When it was time to seek re-election in 2007, the Liberals reprised their commitment to the full-day early learning program for four- and five-year-olds.



Photo: Christine Cousins

"By the close of the decade, issues related to classroom violence had become the focus of a major ETFO campaign and lobbying effort."

Shortly following the 2007 election, Premier McGuinty appointed Charles Pascal, a former deputy minister of education, as his early learning advisor to draft an implementation plan. Pascal's June 2009 report was comprehensive in scope and envisioned a transformed early years system where schools were the hub of children's services. It called for a seamless program for four- and five-year-olds in classes of 20 students taught by a team of teachers and early childhood educators but with teachers only in the classroom for half the day. It also promoted a play-based program and school board-delivered extended day programs where there was sufficient demand.

ETFO lobbies for revised Kindergarten staffing model

Although ETFO supported full-day Kindergarten and welcomed the addition of early childhood educators to support the play-based program, the Federation objected to limiting teachers to a half day. ETFO saw the policy as reminiscent of the previous PC government's failed plans to replace teachers with non-teachers in such subject areas as technology, libraries and Kindergarten. Taking a position against the part-time teacher policy, the Federation argued that teachers couldn't fulfill their legislated duties of assessing and reporting on student progress without being in the class full time. To reinforce the play-based philosophy, under siege in the testing climate fuelled by EQAO, ETFO organized a successful public event in June 2011 at Toronto's Fort York, called the Ultimate Block Party. ETFO modelled the event after an American initiative; a number of ETFO locals later adopted it as a community project.

In February 2010, when the government introduced legislation to implement full-day Kindergarten, it adopted ETFO's position of having a full-time teacher. However, to compensate for the cost of full-time teachers, the plan provided for an average class size of 26 students and no requirement for an early childhood educator where classes had fewer than 16 students. Much of



Photos: Anne de Haas



the additional space built to accommodate the new full-day program anticipated a class size of 20. The program was fully rolled out by 2015-16.

ETFO produced several resources that helped to deepen educators' understanding of play-based learning and child development. In 2010, ETFO released *Thinking It Through: Teaching and Learning in the Kindergarten Classroom*. The following year, the Federation released *Primarily Play: Engaging Primary Learners Through Play*. School boards across Ontario and beyond purchased the resources.

ETFO embraces organizing designated early childhood educators

Once it was clear the government would proceed with full-day Kindergarten, ETFO moved to organize the new ECEs entering the program. ETFO made a point of referring to this professional group as “designated early childhood educators” (DECEs), the term used in the government bill. ETFO argued that DECEs had a unique and distinct role compared to other school board staff who, in some cases, may have had early childhood qualifications. Other unions, like the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), had already organized school board support staff who included ECEs. In a number of instances, these unions were able to secure school board agreement to recognize their new DECE members as part of existing bargaining units without being required to participate in an organizing drive.

During the 2010 union organization drive, the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario publicly endorsed ETFO. The association saw ETFO members as having more in common with ECEs and holding the greatest potential for supporting their members. ETFO was initially successful in organizing ECEs

“Once it was clear the government would proceed with full-day Kindergarten, ETFO moved to organize the new ECEs entering the program.”



Photo: Vivian McCaffrey

in nine school boards and later added a tenth. In every instance where there was a competitive organizing drive, ETFO won. ETFO DECE members are represented through their own stand-alone locals and have become increasingly active in attending Federation programs and spreading their wings at leadership events. A DECE member ran for a position on the Provincial Executive for the first time in August 2017.

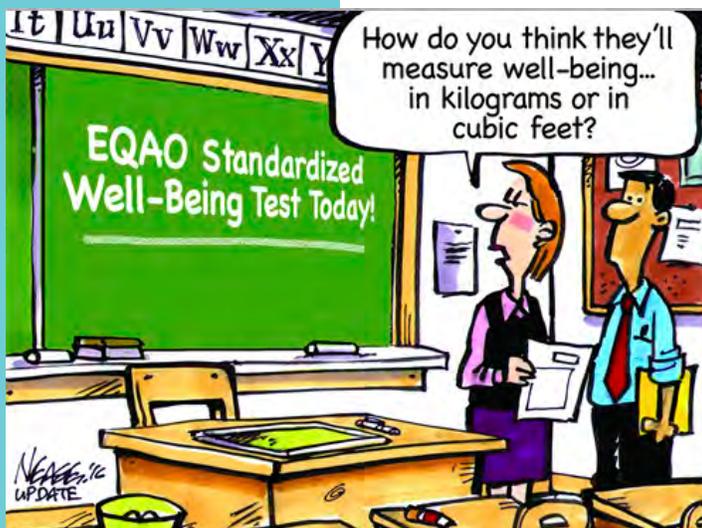
Since its first year of implementation, ETFO has lobbied for smaller class size to support the play-based program as well as more in-service and joint planning time for the teacher-DECE team. A major challenge during the first years of the new program was winning acceptance for the play-based philosophy despite the supportive research.

ETFO CONTINUES TO PUSH BACK ON TEST-DRIVEN CLASSROOMS

ETFO, dating back to its predecessor organizations, has fought against the standardized student testing delivered through the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). Although in 2005, EQAO did reduce the number of testing days and push the test to later in the spring, these modest improvements were overshadowed by the tremendous growth in classroom-based diagnostic tests introduced by the Ministry of Education and school boards.

In April 2009, despite strong opposition from education stakeholder organizations, the government exacerbated the situation by introducing the School Information Finder, a website that allowed the public to compare schools based on EQAO test results.

On the positive side, the Liberal government did introduce the *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* in 2009. The then Education Minister Kathleen Wynne praised ETFO for keeping equity issues alive during the Harris years.



ETFO launches EQAO campaign

At the February 2010 Representative Council, ETFO launched a campaign against EQAO testing and the School Information Finder. It released an Environics Research poll of member and public attitudes towards EQAO testing. The poll found there was no public consensus that EQAO testing had improved the quality of education; half of survey respondents said it made no difference and a small minority indicated they would be upset if EQAO testing was phased out.

ETFO released a video of Joel Westheimer, University of Ottawa professor of education, speaking to the 2010 Representative Council about how large-scale testing was a threat to democracy. ETFO posted the video on its website along with an online letter to MPPs calling for the dismantling of the School Informa-

tion Finder. ETFO had also joined OTF and the affiliates in developing a position paper entitled, *Random Sample Testing – A New Vision for Student Assessment*. OTF and the affiliates used the position paper, released in 2008 and revised in 2011, to encourage other education sector organizations to embrace the random-sample testing model as the most politically saleable alternative to cancelling the tests completely.

Over the last decade, education academics such as Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley have promoted random sample testing. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) has also called for a discussion of the merits of the random-sample model.

The government announced in early September 2017 that it would be reviewing its assessment model. A panel of advisors released its report in April, weeks before the June election. The report didn't call for either the elimination of EQAO tests or a move to random sample testing. However it did recommend cancelling the Grade 3 and Grade 9 tests and focusing on "the importance of prioritizing, valuing and improving classroom assessments and feedback."

ETFO takes lead in gaining new guidelines for student assessment

As part of its 2010-11 campaign, ETFO lobbied the government to limit the number of diagnostic assessments elementary teachers were required to use. When ETFO shared results of its survey of school board diagnostic assessments, the then Premier McGuinty stepped in and required the Ministry to conduct its own survey. This intervention led to the Ministry consulting with stakeholders and issuing a new guideline for diagnostic assessments for the 2011-12 school year.

The Ministry guideline was an important first step. A more significant achievement was the Ministry issuing *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 155* (PPM 155) in January 2013, which outlined how teachers were to apply their professional judgement regarding which diagnostic assessments to use. ETFO had played a leading role in achieving PPM 155; it was a turning point in teachers'

"When ETFO shared results of its survey of school board diagnostic assessments, the then Premier McGuinty stepped in and required the Ministry to conduct its own survey."



efforts to “reclaim the classroom” as professionals. The Federation was well positioned to make ground-breaking progress on the professional judgement issue through the collective bargaining that lay ahead.

ETFO ACTIVISM AND SOLIDARITY GROW IN RESPONSE TO AUSTERITY

ETFO’s first decade closed with the Federation suffering a two per cent salary penalty in its 2008 round of negotiations because of a political impasse with the government and an arbitrary deadline for the close of provincial-level discussions. It also coincided with the stock market crash that led to a global recession and set the context for the Liberal government adopting an austerity agenda.

Confronting the government’s austerity agenda for much of ETFO’s second decade presented numerous challenges. It also gave the Federation the opportunity to mobilize members, many of whom had been students during the Harris era and hadn’t experienced attacks on their hard-won benefits and working conditions. In many ways, the austerity agenda revitalized the union movement. In rallying against the government’s austerity agenda and anti-democratic actions, ETFO grew stronger through its member activism and solidarity.

Liberal government introduces public sector restraint

Premier McGuinty began laying the groundwork for his restraint agenda in the spring of 2011 by appointing economist Don Drummond to head a commission to review public sector expenditures. In its submission, ETFO argued against the contrived mandate, which dictated that the commission consider only government expenditures, not revenue-generating policies. The 2012 Drummond Report called for increased class size; cancellation of full-day Kindergarten or a move to changing the model to employ one teacher in a class of 20 students with no early childhood educator; and a 70 per cent cut in the additional 13,800 non-teaching jobs the Liberals had funded since 2003.

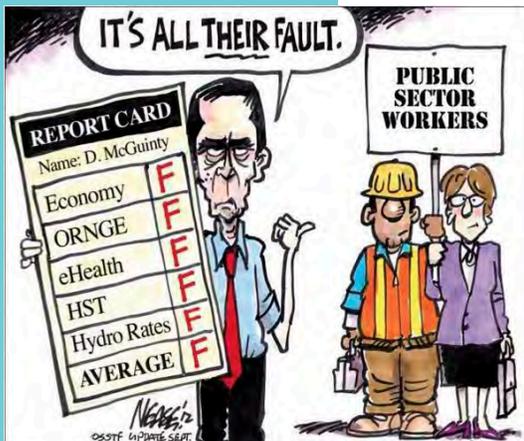


Photo: Stephen Mau

The government rejected the class size and Kindergarten recommendations as well as Drummond's position against a public sector salary freeze which he viewed as a short-term, ineffective fix for reducing government expenditures. Premier McGuinty introduced a symbolic salary freeze for MPPs and then moved to introduce public sector wage restraint.

2012 Provincial bargaining discussions - A one-way conversation

In February 2012, the government commenced its Provincial Discussion Table (PDT), the voluntary discussions with education unions to determine the framework for renewed collective agreements. It tabled bargaining demands for a zero per cent salary increase, including a freeze on the salary grid.

In the face of the government's salary freeze policy, ETFO approached the 2012 round of bargaining discussions with a commitment to rectify the two per cent salary penalty. The government appointed corporate bankruptcy lawyers as their negotiators, who refused to establish ground rules, and talks floundered. ETFO turned its attention to local bargaining, with an internal member mobilization campaign under the banner, "Respect Teachers, Respect Bargaining." To counter the government attack on ETFO, the Federation sponsored television ads featuring ETFO members on the theme, "Teachers Change Lives." Members voted 93 per cent in favour of a one-day strike in the event the government imposed contract terms.

Union solidarity cracks

On July 5, 2012, Minister Laurel Broten announced the government had reached a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) for a two-year (2012-14) collective agreement.

"In the face of the government's salary freeze policy, ETFO approached the 2012 round of bargaining discussions with a commitment to rectify the two per cent salary penalty."





Photo: Stephen Wau

The OECTA MOU contained significant concessions and contract strips: a wage freeze; a partially frozen grid movement; three unpaid days (equivalent to a 1.5 per cent pay cut); the grandparenting of retirement gratuities; a 50 per cent reduction of sick leave taken at 100 per cent pay; no banking of unused sick days; a short-term sick leave plan at reduced pay; a commitment to review and restructure the salary grid after 2014; and language about occasional teacher hiring processes and diagnostic assessments.

'MCGUINTY THREATENS
TO IMPOSE CONTRACTS
ON TEACHERS.'

- Ottawa Citizen, August 2, 2012

Bill 115 imposes contract provisions

On August 27, the government introduced Bill 115, *Putting Students First Act, 2012*, to impose the conditions of the OECTA MOU on the other education unions and prevent strike action during the term of the imposed agreement. On August 28, ETFO took the lead in organizing a Queen's Park rally that brought over 15,000 union members and allies to protest the bill. The south lawn of the legislature was a sea of red ETFO signs depicting the slogan, "Respect Teachers, Respect Bargaining."



Control Your Future campaign mobilizes members

Throughout the 2012 round of bargaining, ETFO mobilized members through a campaign entitled Control Your Future. The goals of rectifying the two per cent salary penalty imposed during the 2008 bargaining round and fighting back against Bill 115 rallied ETFO members behind their union.

When the minority government passed Bill 115 on September 11, Premier McGuinty said he was asking teachers to "hit the pause button" on salary increases. ETFO responded by implementing a job action that asked members "to take a pause" with voluntary activities and participate in "McGuinty Mondays" by focusing on providing for the instruction and safety of students, arriving and leaving school no earlier or later than required by regulation, and not participating in school, board or Ministry regional meetings. Members enthusiastically engaged in this pause campaign from September through November before moving to an expanded work-to-rule campaign that extended through to December and included rotating, province-wide one-day walkouts.



ETFO also took its campaign to the public. On Labour Day, it launched a 30-second TV ad that replayed excerpts of Premier McGuinty's speech to the 2011 ETFO Annual Meeting in which he stated: "We respect the bargaining process and the results of that process...We don't tear up collective agreements." In the

ad, a series of news headlines about the government imposing contract terms followed the speech excerpt.

Unions launch Bill 115 Charter Challenge

ETFO also took its grievance with Bill 115 to the courts. On October 10, ETFO, along with CUPE, OSSTF, OPSEU and UNIFOR, filed a *Charter* challenge based on the bill's contravention of the bargaining rights protected under the *Charter's* freedom of association provisions. The Federation sponsored a print and billboard campaign with the slogan, "*Charter* rights are for everyone." Justice Lederer, the Ontario Superior Court judge assigned to the case, ultimately agreed with the union position; he released his decision on April 20, 2016 and called on both sides to determine an appropriate government remedy to compensate the unions. Despite numerous attempts, ETFO failed to reach a settlement and in the spring of 2018 returned to the Court for a decision. It also filed a bad faith bargaining charge against the government related to its Bill 115-related payments to unions not party to the *Charter* case.

"Education Premier" resigns

On October 15, 2012, Premier McGuinty caught many by surprise by announcing his resignation and proroguing the legislature. The imbroglio regarding the Liberals' cancellation of two gas plants, allegedly to protect Liberal MPPs heading into the 2011 election, had dogged the premier for months. The costs to the taxpayer were close to \$2 billion.

Equally important, the premier had lost his cherished "education premier" moniker. In addition to betraying educators' trust through Bill 115, the Liberals had based their attempt to win the additional seat they needed for a majority by attacking teacher unions in the August 2012 Kitchener-Waterloo by-election. Hoping to win support in this small-c conservative riding, the Liberals circulated anti-union campaign material targeting the ETFO president (*Toronto Star*, October 31, 2012).

ETFO allocated significant resources to the NDP campaign. The Federation released members from the Waterloo Region locals and a number of surrounding locals. NDP candidate Catherine Fife won the by-election with 40 per cent of the vote; the Liberal candidate placed a distant third, a satisfying result given the anti-union campaign.

The ETFO television ad, exposing the hypocrisy of his speech to ETFO's 2011 Annual Meeting regarding his commitment to bargaining rights, can only have helped the then premier make his decision to retire earlier than anticipated. In media interviews following his resignation announcement, he acknowledged that his approach towards teachers was heavy-handed: "It was...regrettable but nothing is beyond repair."



Photo: Vitusha Oberoi



Photo: Vivian McCaffrey



Photo: Vivian McCaffrey

ETFO launches rotating strikes and plans one-day walkout

Throughout the fall, the government urged ETFO to return to the Provincial Discussion Table. Even though Bill 115 had passed, it wouldn't take effect until the government so decided – a measure designed to leave the door open to negotiations. ETFO refused to resume discussions until the terms and conditions changed to allow free, unfettered bargaining. The government refused to budge.

Through its locals, ETFO mobilized members to participate in rallies at Liberal MPPs' offices. The protests kept the ETFO campaign in the news throughout the fall. Members also voted to participate in a day of political protest in the event the government moved to impose contract terms through enacting Bill 115. Ninety-two per cent of voting members supported the one-day protest action. The degree of member support for the anti-Bill 115 campaign was overwhelming; the level of member mobilization was unprecedented. Public support also grew because the bill so clearly undermined fundamental democratic principles.

On January 4, 2013, the government announced it was enacting Bill 115. ETFO planned to hold its one-day protest on January 11. The Ontario Labour Relations Board, however, ruled such action would constitute an illegal strike. ETFO leaders didn't agree with the ruling but decided to comply and cancelled the protests.



New Liberal leader seeks to mend fences

The Liberal party chose Kathleen Wynne, former parent activist, school trustee and education minister, as its new leader on January 26 at Maple Leaf Gardens. Outside the convention, ETFO members brought their placards to join the large OFL demonstration against the government's austerity agenda and its attack on unions.

In her new role as premier, Wynne moved quickly to mend fences and reinstitute bargaining discussions with ETFO. The government had moved to repeal Bill 115 on January 23, a symbolic gesture that didn't undo the imposed contract provisions. Repealing the bill was designed to reset the clock for the new Liberal leader.

ETFO participated in a difficult round of discussions; the government was reluctant to give the Federation more than other education unions. ETFO did achieve a settlement governing the 2012-14 contract period on June 13. ETFO successfully held out for a reinstatement for its two per cent salary penalty. Effective September 1, 2014, ETFO salary grids were adjusted to restore members' placement on the grid, a huge achievement given the context and one that would not have been achieved without the activism and solidarity of ETFO members.

Austerity agenda continues

The government had learned a difficult lesson about bargaining rights but had not turned a corner on its austerity agenda. The 2013 provincial budget stated the government respected collective bargaining and would not override collective agreements. However, it issued a shot across the bow by declaring public sector partners would need to continue to manage future compensation costs within Ontario's fiscal framework, "which includes no funding for incremental compensation increases for new collective agreements." The implication was that public sector unions would gain compensation increases only by identifying savings within the current funding structure.

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Member mobilization central to 2014-17 bargaining round

ETFO served notice to bargain on June 30, 2014. It was ETFO's first round of bargaining under the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act*, which came into law two months prior and formally established a two-tier bargaining process for education sector unions. The Act established OPSBA as the employer agency at the teacher table; a council of trustee associations, representing all provincial trustee associations, were at the table where ETFO represented DECEs, education support personnel (ESPs) and professional support personnel (PSPs).

Bargaining under the new process was challenging and drawn out. It started with determining the ground rules as well as agreeing on what would be negotiated at the central and local tables. ETFO had lobbied strenuously to protect local bargaining during the government consultations on the new act; it wanted to make sure the process upheld the commitment to local bargaining.

OPSBA introduces egregious contract strips

When central bargaining finally began in early 2015, OPSBA tabled a set of contract strips aimed at setting back the clock on years of hard-fought bargaining gains. The strips included: management control over teacher preparation time; increased teacher supervision time; teachers losing the ability to determine which student assessments to use; removal of the new, fair teacher hiring policy; erosion of occasional teacher working conditions; erosion of local bargaining rights; removal of class size protections in local agreements; and changing the role of DECEs in Kindergarten programs.

In the face of protracted negotiations and the failure of OPSBA to remove the contract strips, ETFO filed for conciliation. ETFO members commenced work action on May 11. The action focused on withdrawal of administrative duties and participation in Ministry of Education initiatives. To the delight of most ETFO members and many parents, the ETFO job action also included withdrawal from administering EQAO tests that resulted in the tests in English public boards being cancelled that year.

“When central bargaining finally began in early 2015, OPSBA tabled a set of contract strips aimed at setting back the clock on years of hard-fought bargaining gains.”



Photos: Vivian McCaffrey

Locals rally against government and OPSBA

In late spring, both the Ontario Liberal Party and OPSBA held annual meetings at the Blue Mountain resort. Hundreds of ETFO members were on site to greet them and get out the message that the Federation wouldn't return to the bargaining table until the contract strips were removed. OPSBA refused to budge and the government refused to intervene.

ETFO ad campaign seeks public support

ETFO's job action included submitting students' final marks to the principal but not completing report cards. Some school boards attempted to foster parent anger towards ETFO by announcing they couldn't issue final report cards in June. On June 13, ETFO placed its first of three full-page newspaper ads with a letter to parents explaining the Federation's job action and that there was no reason for students not receiving their marks. The school boards subsequently reversed their decision not to issue report cards.

After a summer-long negotiations standstill, ETFO placed another full-page ad in dailies across the province informing the public of all the dates the Federation was available for negotiations. A few days later, negotiations resumed, but the employer side wasn't receptive to ETFO's bargaining demands. On October 5, ETFO celebrated World Teachers' Day by acknowledging that OPSBA and the government had finally returned to the table but with the message: "When it comes to our students, one size doesn't fit all." The government asked ETFO to desist with the ads and stepped in to help the bargaining process move forward. The school boards' attempt to undermine public support for educators and demonize ETFO hadn't worked and the management side was forced to remove the egregious contract strips.

ETFO agreement bucks "net-zero" framework

ETFO reached a tentative agreement in early November that included a 2.5 per cent salary increase and enhancements to working conditions. Other gains included improvements to the teacher hiring regulation that benefited occasional teachers, and a half-day Professional Activity Day devoted to health and safety. The agreement gave ETFO the ability to establish its own provincial benefits trust and established a number of joint workgroups, including on health and safety, class size, Kindergarten, special education and DECEs, that would lay important groundwork for future bargaining and government policy decisions. ETFO announced on November 13, 2015 that members had ratified the agreement.

**WE'VE CIRCLED THE DATES
WE'RE READY TO TALK**



Ontario's public elementary teachers have been without a contract for over a year. After seven days of bargaining in September, the Liberal government and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) have suddenly walked away and refused to schedule further meetings.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) has been working hard to reach a fair collective agreement that preserves teaching and learning conditions in our public elementary schools. The Liberal government and OPSBA should be willing to do the same.

It's not too late. ETFO is ready to meet immediately—and for as long as it takes—to reach an agreement that's fair to teachers and occasional teachers, and good for our students.

We are asking the Liberal government and OPSBA to rejoin us at the central bargaining table.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO FIND AN AGREEMENT THAT'S GOOD FOR OUR SCHOOLS AND OUR STUDENTS.

ETFO  FEED
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
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BuildingBetterSchools.ca



**WHEN IT COMES TO
OUR STUDENTS,
ONE SIZE
DOESN'T FIT ALL**

Every one of our students is unique and each one learns differently. That's why class size and support for students with special needs are so important. And it's why Ontario's public elementary teachers are taking a strong stand for more resources and individual attention for our students.

Anyone who has been in a Grade 1 classroom and a Grade 11 classroom can tell you how different they are. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario is working to achieve an agreement that reflects the unique teaching and learning conditions in elementary classrooms.

The Liberal government and Ontario Public School Boards' Association have agreed to return to the bargaining table today. We hope they're sincere in wanting to reach an agreement.

WHEN IT COMES TO TEACHERS' CONTRACTS, ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL, EITHER.

On World Teachers' Day, let's work to reach a collective agreement that meets the real needs of our elementary students, teachers and schools.

ETFO  FEED
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BuildingBetterSchools.ca

Our Union, Our Values, Our Profession

Throughout the bargaining period, members were engaged in a multi-faceted communications and mobilization effort under the slogan, “Our Union, Our Values, Our Profession.” ETFO launched a member mobilization plan to support the online strike votes that included steward meetings, steward-led worksite meetings, local information meetings and province-wide telephone town hall sessions. ETFO staff managed a bargaining website, Facebook group, regular bargaining eNewsletter, and a Twitter campaign that informed and engaged members throughout the process. Regularly, ETFO posted videos with updates from the president and members could keep in touch with the campaign by downloading an app to their phones. The collective bargaining communications campaign built on the success of the previous round and took it to the next level through its ongoing social media engagement of members.



ETFO trailblazes in 2017 contract extension

Education unions had demonstrated their ability to have an impact politically, especially during elections. In anticipation of the June 2018 provincial election and the desire to avoid campaigning during an education sector strike, the government approached the education unions in the fall of 2016 about their willingness to negotiate a two-year extension to their 2014-17 agreements.

The negotiations provided an opportunity to win gains on issues ETFO had brought to the table in recent rounds: improvements to class size and increased funding for students with special needs. ETFO reached a tentative extension agreement on February 2, 2017. It included an additional \$50 million for special education, \$39 million to support additional special education teachers, reduction in grades 4 - 8 class size to 24.5 students over a five-year period, a two-staged cap on Kindergarten class size (30 students in 2017-18 and 29 students in 2018-19), two paid days of professional development for occasional teachers and a salary increase of four per cent over two years.



Photo: Christine Cousins



Photo: Kathryn Galtens

On March 4, after a series of town hall meetings and online voting, ETFO announced its members had supported the agreement. ETFO had been alone in negotiating the class size and special education improvements, but the government extended those benefits to the other union contracts. The improvements were a significant first step towards achieving ETFO's class size and special education bargaining goals.

ETFO PROMOTES BUILDING BETTER SCHOOLS VISION

Throughout ETFO's second decade, the Federation grounded its advocacy and public relations work on its *Building Better Schools* plan, a vision for public education reform. Launched in October 2010, in advance of the 2011 provincial election, the *Building Better Schools* document called for five key overarching "building blocks" for reform: smaller classes, more supports for students with special needs, more meaningful student assessment, more support for specialist teachers and a holistic curriculum, and more inclusive schools by addressing equity issues. ETFO provincial leaders used the plan as the basis for their meetings with MPPs and political staff at Queen's Park; local leaders used it to lobby MPPs at the riding level and to engage parents in a discussion about education reform.

***Building Better Schools* includes fighting anti-union "right to work" policies**

Prior to the 2014 provincial election, ETFO issued a revised *Building Better Schools* document that presented updated research to support its policies and that added a sixth building block: the importance of unionized school workplaces. ETFO added this sixth section in response to the "right to work" anti-union policies promoted by then Ontario PC leader, Tim Hudak. The Federation's policy spoke to how its members' working conditions were students' learning conditions and how unions contribute to the quality of public education.

"Throughout ETFO's second decade, the Federation grounded its advocacy and public relations work on its *Building Better Schools* plan, a vision for public education reform."

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST THREAT TO BETTER SCHOOLS IN ONTARIO?

TIM HUDAK. BAD NEWS FOR SCHOOLS, KIDS, AND TEACHERS.

Recovering from the Mike Harris era hasn't been easy for Ontario schools. And now Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservatives want to drag us back again, undoing our progress on smaller classes and early learning.

Ontario PC Leader Tim Hudak

Hudak's education agenda:
**Cuts first.
Kids last.**

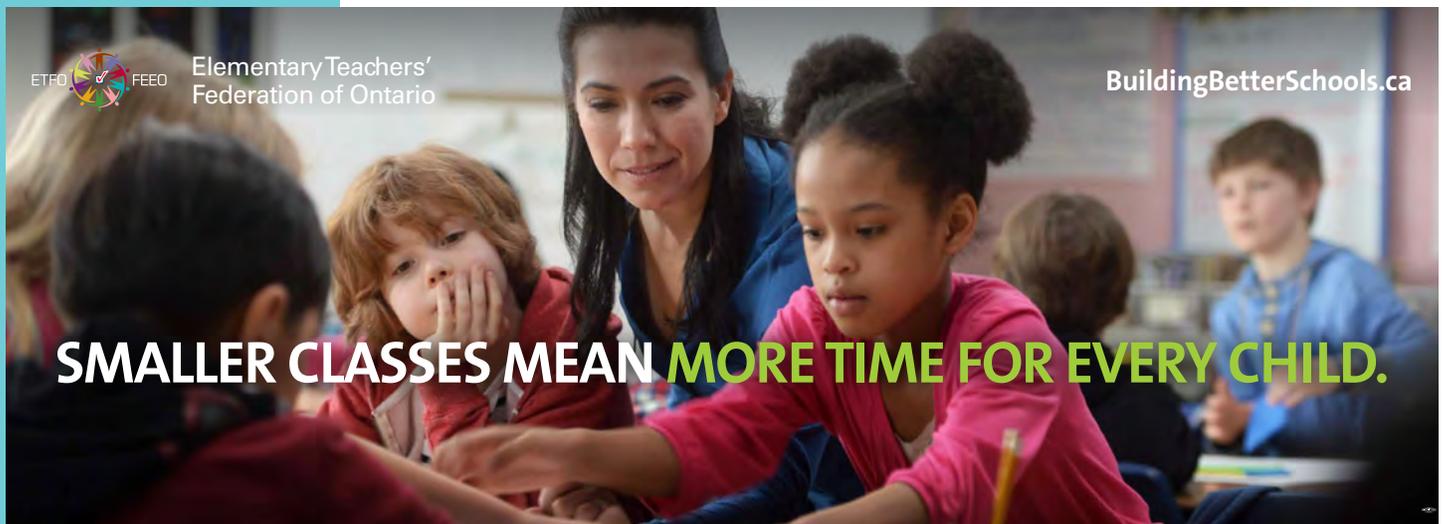
Published by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

During the election campaign, ETFO distributed pamphlets to members about the threat of the PC anti-union policies and distributed a householder in 37 swing ridings that drew attention to the PC campaign promise to cut 100,000 public sector jobs, including 19,000 education positions. The ETFO campaign had a direct impact on suppressing the PC vote and preventing what many pollsters had predicted would be a PC victory. The election also saw three ETFO members elected with Federation support: NDP candidates Joe Cimino in Sudbury and Jennifer French in Oshawa and Liberal candidate Ann Hoggarth in Barrie.

PR campaign focuses on class size and special education

Quickly following on the heels of its ratified 2014-17 collective agreements, ETFO launched a Spring 2015 campaign that featured a new series of ads promoting its class size and special education policies. The campaign included TV, online and social media ads. For a five-week period, commuters were greeted by billboards, bus ads, subway ads, and ads taking over staircases in GO Transit stations that promoted ETFO's message about smaller classes. A radio ad, which ran for two weeks towards the end of the school year, capped the campaign.

ETFO designed the public relations campaign to build public awareness and support for the *Building Better Schools* plan and to build trust in the union as it looked forward to the next round of bargaining. The campaigning and lobbying paid off. In April 2017, the Ontario NDP released its pre-election policy document that included a number of ETFO policies, including reduced Kindergarten class size; more resources for students with special needs; a move to random-sample EQAO testing; a commitment to creating healthy and safe schools; and a plan to increase access to high-quality child care.



Elementary Teachers'
Federation of Ontario

BuildingBetterSchools.ca

SMALLER CLASSES MEAN MORE TIME FOR EVERY CHILD.

ETFO seeks support through community engagement

In response to urging from local leaders, ETFO took its *Building Better Schools* campaign to the next level by working with locals to sponsor community forums in the spring of 2017. The forums, held across the province, involved parents and community groups in a dialogue about how to improve schools so all students can be successful. Many of the discussions focused on issues related to the increasing incidence of classroom violence, including challenges to supporting students with special needs and those with mental health issues. To promote forum attendance, ETFO waged a campaign through online advertising and its retooled website, buildingbetterschools.ca.

The rewards of organizing these community events included building a stronger local profile and network of allies. Community outreach and organizing is likely to be a major ETFO focus as the Federation looks forward to entering its third decade.

ETFO Mobilizes for 2018 Provincial Election

Every election is unique and the campaign leading up to the June 7 provincial election was no exception. Months before the official campaign got underway, polls indicated the PCs were heading to victory and that voters were hungry for change after 15 years of Liberal rule. The party hit a snag when PC leader Patrick Brown was forced to resign in the face of allegations of sexual misconduct. When former Toronto councillor Doug Ford replaced him just a few months from election day, some speculated the political dynamics had changed in favour of more progressive change.

In mid-April, ETFO released its updated *Building Better Schools* platform, which presented two additional policy “building blocks” – a call for a fair education funding model and support for a single school system. The NDP platform committed to a number of ETFO policies, including

“In response to urging from local leaders, ETFO took its *Building Better Schools* campaign to the next level by working with locals to sponsor community forums in the spring of 2017.”



Photo: James Taylor

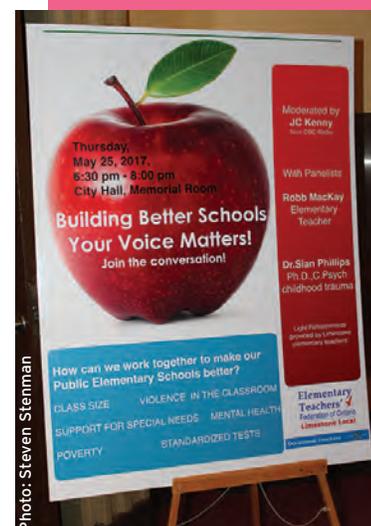


Photo: Steven Stenman

“At the May Representative Council, the day the election writ was issued, President Hammond announced that ETFO was endorsing the NDP.”

conducting a comprehensive review of the funding formula, ending EQAO testing, capping Kindergarten classes at 26 students, and addressing classroom violence.

At the May Representative Council, the day the election writ was issued, President Hammond announced that ETFO was endorsing the NDP. Leader Andrea Horwath made a tour stop at the ETFO building the following day to promote the party’s education policies. At the start of the campaign, polls indicated the PC Party and the NDP were neck and neck in popular vote. ETFO focused its public campaign messages and its member mobilization efforts on encouraging support for the NDP. ETFO locals and members rallied behind the NDP.

New election rules preventing unions and corporations from making donations and limiting third party advertising meant ETFO had to change how it promoted issues during an election campaign and how it worked to affect the outcome. The spending limits led the Federation to focus on online advertising, social media and engaging members and the public through its *BuildingBetterSchools.ca* site. ETFO employed eNewsletters, text messages, videos, in-school meetings and robocalls to encourage members to engage in the election and vote.

On election day, the PCs earned the support of 40 per cent of voters, winning a majority with 76 seats. The NDP became the official opposition with 40 seats. Two of the 10 ETFO members who ran as candidates were elected: NDP MPP Jennifer French in Oshawa and first-time candidate Terence Kernaghan for the NDP in London North Centre. ETFO closed its second decade as it began its first – faced with a PC government promising expenditure cuts.



HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES BECOME ETFO PRIORITY

Addressing workplace violence was an issue ETFO faced during the Federation's first 10 years, but one that became increasingly a priority during its second decade. Delegates to annual meetings regularly brought forward motions calling for ETFO to lobby the government on health and safety issues. Professional relations counselling staff were logging a steep rise in calls from members reporting student violence and the failure of principals and school boards to report the incidents or respond effectively.

Many of the ETFO Annual Meeting motions called for more member and pre-service health and safety training. In 2010, ETFO hired a staff member designated to the health and safety file for a two-year contract. The staff addition was so welcomed that a 2011 Annual Meeting motion called for the position to be permanent, which the Executive acted on in 2012. In response to ever-increasing concerns, the Executive added a one-year seconded position to the health and safety staff complement in 2017 to focus specifically on the issue of workplace violence.

In addition to assisting locals respond to workplace hazards such as asbestos and radon, the health and safety staff person enhanced local and member training and supported ETFO's increased lobbying efforts, including advocating for greater collaboration and coherence between the ministries of Education and Labour, both of which had jurisdiction over school workplaces. ETFO's investment in staff resources committed to workplace health and safety resulted in important reforms moving forward. Working with its labour partners, ETFO contributed amendments to employment standards legislation, including protections for victims of domestic assault.

ETFO also took its health and safety concerns to the bargaining table. In the 2013 *Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Ontario and the Elementary Teachers' Federation*, the Federation

"Working with its labour partners, ETFO contributed amendments to employment standards legislation, including protections for victims of domestic assault."



Photo: Vivian McCaffrey

“ETFO organized a Queen’s Park lobby day in April to enable ETFO local leaders to speak directly to their MPPs about how school violence was affecting their constituents.”

negotiated a provincial task force on health and safety, co-chaired by ETFO and the Ontario Public Supervisory Officers’ Association (OPSOA). The task force released its report in September 2014. The report’s recommendations related to training, workplace violence, lockdown procedures, environmental concerns, joint health and safety committee effectiveness and a provincial structure for education stakeholder organizations.

In response to the report, the government established the Provincial Working Group for Health and Safety, which included representatives from provincial education organizations and the ministries of Education and Labour. ETFO took the lead in building consensus and mapping a plan to address workplace violence and serious student incidents that involved both ministries.

Governments and task forces often move slowly. In early 2017, sensing members’ growing sense of urgency about workplace violence, ETFO embarked on a multi-faceted campaign that increased lobbying efforts and took the issue to the public. ETFO held a news conference attended by all major media outlets in January 2017. The news conference laid out the violence ETFO members were witnessing and experiencing. It identified an action plan that called on the government to increase resources and supports for students with special education and mental health issues, increase supports for community-based services, and more effectively enforce the requirements for reporting incidents of school violence.

ETFO organized a Queen’s Park lobby day in April to enable ETFO local leaders to speak directly to their MPPs about how school violence was affecting their constituents. The Federation also ran a radio ad on the need for more resources to ensure classrooms were safe and healthy learning environments.

The radio ad was a message that the additional funding for supports for students with special



Photos: Vivian McCaffrey

needs achieved through the 2017 contract extension agreement was only a first step. It also set the scene for the local community forums held that spring. Student violence and mental health are issues faced by educators across the country; they will likely continue to be a priority focus for ETFO in the years ahead.

A HIGH STANDARD OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

As ETFO continues to provide for the professional learning of members, the Federation has developed new and innovative programs. Whether supporting union education and leadership in full-year programs like Union School, or helping members be better professionals in their schools and classrooms, ETFO offers a wealth of resources and opportunities in many formats (e.g., conferences, webinars, online courses, workshops and book clubs). Ministry of Education grants enhanced the way ETFO has supported members by providing new programs such as poverty and education, expanding spaces in existing programs such as summer academy and establishing subsidies for some additional qualification (AQ) courses.

In 2010, ETFO launched 21 online AQ courses, delivered by practising teachers, for teachers. The Federation charged \$650 per course, well below the standard \$1,000 charged by other providers, which forced them to lower their fees. ETFO was the first AQ provider to develop several equity-based courses that focused on inclusive classrooms and teaching LGBTQ and FNMI students. ETFO now offers close to 80 AQ courses and is one of the larger AQ providers in the province.

Advocacy is a big part of professional learning work. Providing input to the Ministry of Education on policy documents such as *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario*



Photo: Anne de Haas



“...ETFO made significant gains during the 2014-16 round of bargaining – the first round under the new provincial bargaining framework – by negotiating a definition of professional judgement in the central agreement.”



Photos: Christine Cousins

It's Elementary

Schools and initiatives such as full-day Kindergarten, the Renewed Math Strategy, report cards, curriculum revision, and special education, ensures that the voices of 83,000 members are heard before programs and changes are implemented.

Representing the membership also occurs at other agencies like EQAO and the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). The OCT's *Professional Learning Framework* is an example where ETFO and the other affiliates lobbied for the importance of self-directed learning and professional judgement, which is explicitly referenced several times in the final version.

On the topic of professional judgement, ETFO made significant gains during the 2014-16 round of bargaining – the first round under the new provincial bargaining framework – by negotiating a definition of professional judgement in the central agreement. The Federation is working with the new contract language to increase the ability of teachers to make professional decisions related to assessment, reporting and other classroom matters.

Whether it's providing meaningful programs and resources or advocating for the membership at the provincial level, ETFO is a leader in supporting the professional issues and professional learning of members.

ETFO'S COMMITMENT TO EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CONTINUES

ETFO Equity Officer appointed

ETFO began its second decade by commissioning an extensive review of ETFO policies, programs and publications to assess the Federation's equity work. In June 2008, ETFO appointed Sheena Hanley, a former president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and former deputy general secretary of Education International, as the ETFO Equity Officer. In her October 2009 report, Hanley said she continued to be impressed by ETFO's work to promote social justice and equity and commented on the importance of ETFO members being aware of how their union had taken steps that



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

few unions had taken. Her report made recommendations to assist ETFO “move to the next level of implementation of equity.”

A key recommendation of the ETFO Equity Officer’s report centred on increasing the diversity of ETFO staff. It called for increasing the representation of women in senior staff positions and members of racialized groups in all job categories but especially in senior staff roles. In 2010, ETFO adopted an Employment Equity Plan to support its goal for greater staff diversity. The plan included reaching out to equality-seeking groups, providing programs to better prepare members from designated groups for the ETFO hiring process and increasing leadership opportunities for members from designated groups.

As staff retire, the Federation has made a serious effort to hire staff who self-identify in one of ETFO’s five identified groups. In 2016, the General Secretary reported that “gaps identified in earlier reports” had been closed. This was largely attributed to “consistent outreach, wider publication of postings and targeted leadership training and encouragement.” As ETFO marks the close of its second decade, it is having an external review conducted of hiring procedures and the ETFO Employment Equity Plan. There is always more work to do; the Federation wants to ensure it remains a leader in the area of equity, including equity in our hiring practices.

ETFO continues as leader in equity programs and resources

ETFO’s focus on equity has included developing innovative resources to support members address racism, gender bias and disability issues, support inclusivity of LGBTQ members and students, promote greater union participation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) members, and increase professional learning and resources to support FNMI curriculum. To support its FNMI programs, ETFO hired an Ojibway member to executive staff in 2014, a hiring promoted by reso-



Photo: Jill Aoki-Barrett



Photo: Kristy Boyce

lutions to the Annual Meeting from ETFO's Aboriginal Education Committee. In the context of the 2015 *Truth and Reconciliation Report* on Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples, ETFO has been at the forefront of providing members with training and resources to engage Indigenous students and teach about Indigenous history and culture.

Throughout the decade, ETFO has introduced innovative programs and resources. In 2012, the Federation introduced a workshop entitled, *Addressing Islamophobia*, later updated as *Islamophobia Affects All our Children*. In 2013-14, ETFO staff developed a new workshop and accompanying video, *Everyone is Able*, designed to increase awareness of and sensitivity to issues around ability/disability. Pushing the boundaries of equity training, in 2014, ETFO introduced an educator resource on white privilege entitled, *Re-Think, Re-Connect, Re-Imagine: Thinking about ourselves, our schools, our communities. Reflecting on White privilege*. ETFO's equity work on this topic garnered significant media attention.

In 2017, ETFO launched a new resource entitled, *365 Black Canadian Curriculum and Calendar*. This resource includes lesson plans for all grades, focusing on the contributions of black Canadians. The calendar highlights one black Canadian each day.

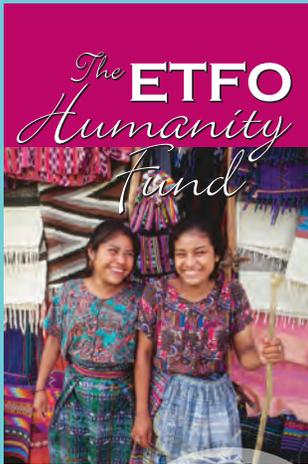
ETFO has continued to provide in-service, resources and articles in *Voice* for its equity work supporting LGBTQ members and students. In 2013, ETFO developed a workshop and accompanying pamphlet on *Welcoming LGBTQ Families into our Schools*. In 2014, ETFO took a leading role in supporting the WorldPride event in Toronto that included a children's installation called, *Pride House That Kids Built*. In 2015, staff launched the *LGBTQ Inclusive SchoolPlace Starts Here* video, which features interviews of LGBTQ educators who discuss the challenges they face in their workplaces and classrooms. Also in 2015, ETFO passed a transgender policy.

Women's Programs continue to be an integral part of ETFO. In 2014, ETFO did a full review of our Women's Programs, identifying gaps and areas needing more focus. One of these gaps was mentoring of women members. In 2015, ETFO began a three-year Mentor Coaching pilot program for women.

ETFO endeavours to respond to members' ever-changing needs in the classroom; when refugees from Syria began arriving in Canada in the winter of 2015, ETFO staff quickly developed a workshop to assist ETFO members welcome refugees into their classroom.

ETFO expands international work

ETFO has continued to support global education, equity and women's equality through international donations, global scholarships for women and girls, and participation in education partnerships. ETFO has increased the number of members who participate in Project Overseas, the program that sends Canadian teachers to work with experienced teachers in host countries to deliver teacher professional learning. The Federation has made a significant contribution to education development projects in such countries



as Bénin, Cambodia, Colombia, Dubai and Thailand through working in partnership with such international organizations as Right to Play and the Maddox Jolie-Pitt Foundation. The ETFO Humanity fund continues to grow and support the work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation and other international aid organizations.

LOOKING FORWARD

During its second decade, the challenges ETFO confronted contributed to its growth and strength, a strength grounded on member activism. ETFO has endeavoured to earn its members' trust and support through the programs and services it provides. As the Federation has grown as a respected member of the labour community, it has worked to ensure its members have a strong understanding of their union's role in supporting their working life and advocating for a strong public education system. Fostering greater member activism within the labour movement will be a focus going forward.

Since its inception, ETFO has been at the forefront of promoting and practising equity. There remain challenges – at the school level, within the union and in society – to achieving the Federation's broad social justice and equity goals. The last decade has witnessed ETFO expanding and strengthening its equity work and laying the foundation for even greater achievements in the decade that lies ahead. Future gains will depend on the active support and engagement of members as well as parents and other community-based allies.

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Photo: Baek

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Photo: Christine Cousins