



**ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF ONTARIO
THAMES VALLEY OCCASIONAL TEACHER LOCAL
PROVINCIAL TAKEOVER - BULLETIN #2**

September 24, 2008

THE TIME IS NOW

Beginning at ETFO's 2008 Annual Meeting and continuing to the present day, we are somewhat mystified by the late summer headlines in the media that attempt to vilify teachers for attempting to close the funding gap between elementary and secondary pupils. Let's be perfectly clear about this objective and state for the record that the goal is not brand new.

Since its inception, ETFO has prided itself on being able to negotiate collective agreements that offer not only enhancements to its membership but also provide a definite improvement to the learning conditions of Ontario's elementary students. We are not only advocates for ourselves but for parents and communities that might not have the spokespersons or the resources to champion lower class-sizes, enhanced programming, specialist teachers, differentiated instruction, and more textbooks.

Prior to the commencement of this round of negotiations ETFO stated that it wants to finally close the elementary funding gap that has existed for decades. From Windsor to Kirkland Lake, we are seeing newspapers whose editorial writers have highlighted their columns with bold type and inflammatory headlines. Many of you have seen or read, "Call the bluff on the teachers' union" or "Elementary teachers won't back down in funding fight."

Well, it didn't take long, but now it appears that school boards have hopped onto a 'we-can't afford-it-bandwagon'. Disguised as public service messages, boards are proclaiming on their web-sites that elementary teacher demands can't be met because they have no money and their hands are tied to the 'Provincial Discussion Table'. Unfortunately, they are grossly exaggerating the contents of the framework offer to undermine negotiations. The purpose of their 'information' is to try and turn community support away from you. They want your community to pressure local teacher negotiators into accepting all of the restrictions and the contract strips that are inherent in the offer that was presented. We will elaborate more on the fallacies of the framework that was offered as we go forward in the process if we cannot arrive at a deal.

As stated in a previous bulletin, "bargaining is not only about provincial goals, it is also about enhancing local rights and entitlements. These issues are ones that members commented upon and advocated for during the drafting and subsequent ratification of the local preliminary submissions." The boards have no restrictions on bargaining any local working conditions be it with teachers, occasional teachers or any other educational worker local.

It is ETFO's intent to continue to remain at the table to bargain outstanding and unresolved local working conditions. We refuse to be subject to arbitrary deadlines in this set of negotiations.

The concerted effort by those opposed to closing the gap is to make you focus on a 12%

salary offer. They want to demoralize you into believing that now is not the right time to make changes to the funding formula. Will anyone ever say now is the right time? Have they in the past?

The November 30th deadline date that you have read about is a tactic being employed to frighten people into thinking that awful things will happen if there is no deal by that date. First of all, no, you will not be on strike if and when that date passes and no settlement has been achieved. Secondly, ETFO will not be taking any kind of vote on a single offer only about salary to its membership. We will only present offers to our members to vote upon that address class sizes, prep time, supervision time, increased funding, specialist teachers, right to employment, experience credit and benefit improvements.

The 12% offer over four-years is a red-herring to draw away any attention about solving the problem of the funding gap. Attention must be kept on the gap and not on other issues.

Other affiliates have agreed to a provincial framework. However, the reasons that ETFO has not agreed to that framework are varied. We do not question whether or not a framework is good for other affiliates but whether or not it is not good enough for ETFO members. From our viewpoint we cannot agree to language that permits strips that nullify the gains made over the past four years and achieved through Campaign 200. We refuse to give up your right to choose your own activities during your preparation time. We won't accept members being ordered to provide supervision and not having that time counted as assigned time. We certainly won't accept a funding formula that mathematically makes us wait for thirty years to enable us to achieve grade four to eight class sizes at the elementary level that compare with those in secondary. If we had accepted the framework that was proposed any member in their last twenty five years of teaching would never see class sizes comparable to the ones at the secondary level. In effect, accepting the framework would have meant you would never realize working conditions equal to those of secondary teachers during the life of this or any other foreseeable contract.

The stand that you are making is about integrity, it is about self-worth, and it is about recognition. We believe that threatening to cut your current salary offer by 1% will not intimidate you to abandon your principles and vilify your local negotiators. We will not negotiate under the threat of an arbitrary deadline. ETFO shall continue to bargain. As we get nearer to any deadline, of any kind, which requires any action-you will be informed.

It can't be stated often enough - please do not be swayed by, or listen to, unsubstantiated rumours. The only vehicle for reliable information comes from ETFO. Should you have any questions about negotiations or CLOSE THE GAP, call the local office and speak with one of the released officers. Subscribe to the e-newsletter located at www.etfo.ca. Attend membership meetings where President, David Clegg is speaking on negotiations.

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