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**forum**

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# The politics of political action

OSSTF/FEESO's political loyalties? It's always about our members.



Countless times over the years, OSSTF/FEESO members have stood together in solidarity to defend their rights and their working conditions, and to protect the integrity and the quality of the publicly-funded education system in Ontario. But while they are frequently united by common goals and mutual struggles, there is nothing monolithic or homogenous about OSSTF/FEESO's 60,000 or so members. Within that membership there dwells a wealth of diversity that manifests in numberless ways, one of which is with regard to political orientation.

In my role as Editor of both *Education Forum* and *Update*, I now and again receive feedback from members who object to specific political opinions or statements that appear in those publications, or who take issue with the political strategies adopted by the Federation. As the June provincial election loomed closer and OSSTF/FEESO's election strategy began to unfold, those objections—though still infrequent—began to pop up a little more often. There's nothing surprising about this. With tens of thousands of members, it would be naïve to expect that every member would be in agreement with every statement or Federation strategy, and it's reasonable to expect that some members who disagree would want to express that disagreement.

But while there is nothing surprising or unwelcome about members expressing a range of political opinions, I do find it disconcerting to receive the occasional communication suggesting that the Federation has no business adopting a political strategy at all, and should just steer clear of politics altogether. I was recently talking about this to a colleague, and he offered what I think is an astute analogy. He said, "A union that doesn't pay attention to politics is like a farmer who doesn't pay attention to the weather."

It's an analogy that works for all unions that operate within the regulatory framework of provincial labour legislation, but it's particularly true for public sector unions like OSSTF/FEESO. When weather turns hostile, the farmer's crops and the farmer's livelihood are likely to suffer. Likewise, when the political environment turns hostile—as it did, for example, under the Mike Harris government in the mid-1990s—everything from members' working conditions to compensation to the integrity of the public education system itself can be at serious risk. This is why OSSTF/FEESO always pays very close attention to the political environment.

Unlike the farmer who is powerless to affect the weather, however, OSSTF/FEESO has both the opportunity and every right to work within the democratic process to encourage political results that are desirable for Federation members. The union has a long history of strategic political action. Sometimes that takes the form of large, high-profile undertakings like our participation in the historic political protest over Bill 160 in 1997, which to this day remains the largest job action ever undertaken by education workers in North America. And sometimes it takes the form of less visible initiatives like last year's Lobby Day at Queen's Park, where 120

OSSTF/FEESO members from all over the province met with MPPs from all parties, including cabinet ministers and opposition leaders, to talk about violence in our workplaces. That particular effort resulted in major commitments from both the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour to take exactly the kind of action our members were lobbying for.

And, of course, at least once every four years a provincial election becomes the focus of the Federation's political activities. OSSTF/FEESO is not, and has never been, aligned or affiliated with any political party, and our approach to electoral politics is never about advancing the interests of one party over another. Instead, it is about advancing the interests of our members and protecting the integrity of public education in Ontario. Decisions about which parties or candidates to support, or not support, are predicated entirely on that objective. It's important for individual OSSTF/FEESO members to understand this when they find that their personal political loyalties are at odds with the Federation's election strategies.

To take a position that the Federation should not involve itself with electoral politics at all is frankly tantamount to suggesting that OSSTF/FEESO should abdicate its responsibility to protect the rights and the working conditions of its members. Almost a century of experience has shown us, over and over again, that the disposition of the government at Queen's Park can, and usually does, have a dramatic impact on the lives of OSSTF/FEESO members.

To whatever extent political action can help to create a more positive environment in which to advocate for the interests of education workers, it will always be the Federation's duty to engage in the political process.

Michael Young, Editor  
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# La politique de l'action politique

Les allégeances politiques d'OSSTF/FEESO? C'est toujours pour nos membres.

À maintes reprises au fil des ans, les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO se sont serré les coudes, dans la solidarité, pour défendre leurs droits et leurs conditions de travail et pour préserver l'intégrité et la qualité du système d'éducation financé à même les deniers publics en Ontario. Mais même s'ils sont souvent unis par des luttes et des objectifs communs, il n'y a rien de monolithique ni d'homogène à propos des quelque 60 000 membres d'OSSTF/FEESO. Au sein de cet effectif réside une grande diversité qui se manifeste d'innombrables façons dont l'une se rapporte à l'orientation politique.

Dans mon rôle de rédacteur en chef d'*Education Forum* et d'*Update*, je reçois de temps à autre des commentaires des membres qui sont en désaccord avec des opinions politiques précises ou avec des déclarations qui paraissent dans ces publications ou qui contestent les stratégies politiques adoptées par la Fédération. À l'approche des élections provinciales du mois de juin et au fur et à mesure que la stratégie électorale d'OSSTF/FEESO se déploie, ces objections, qui sont cependant peu fréquentes, ont commencé à apparaître un peu plus souvent. Cela n'a rien de surprenant. Avec des dizaines de milliers de membres, il serait utopique de croire que chaque membre serait d'accord avec chaque déclaration ou stratégie de la Fédération et il est raisonnable de s'attendre à ce que certains membres, qui ne sont pas du même avis, veuillent exprimer ce désaccord.

Mais bien qu'il n'y a rien de surprenant ou importun que les membres expriment un éventail d'opinions politiques, je trouve déconcertant de recevoir des communications occasionnelles suggérant que la Fédération n'a pas lieu d'adopter de stratégie politique et ne devrait tout simplement pas se mêler de politique. Récemment, je parlais de ceci à un collègue et il m'a présenté ce que je pense être une analogie judicieuse. Il a dit « Un syndicat qui ne demeure

pas à l'affût de la politique est comme un agriculteur qui ne se préoccupe pas de la météo. »

Il s'agit d'une analogie qui fonctionne pour tous les syndicats qui œuvrent dans le cadre réglementaire de la législation provinciale sur le travail, mais c'est particulièrement le cas pour les syndicats du secteur public comme OSSTF/FEESO. Si le mauvais temps s'installe, la récolte et les moyens de subsistance de l'agriculteur risquent d'en souffrir. De même, lorsque le climat politique devient hostile, comme ce fut le cas par exemple sous le gouvernement de Mike Harris au milieu des années 90, tout, des conditions de travail des membres à la rémunération en passant par l'intégrité du système d'éducation publique lui-même, serait exposé à de sérieux risques. C'est la raison pour laquelle OSSTF/FEESO suit toujours de très près le climat politique.

Contrairement à l'agriculteur qui est dans l'incapacité d'influencer la météo, OSSTF/FEESO a, pourtant, l'occasion et est pleinement en droit de travailler au sein du processus démocratique pour favoriser des résultats politiques qui sont souhaitables pour les membres de la Fédération. Le syndicat a une longue tradition d'action politique stratégique. Parfois, cela se traduit par de grands engagements très médiatisés comme notre participation à la manifestation politique historique contre le *Projet de loi 160* en 1997 qui, encore aujourd'hui, reste le plus important moyen de pression jamais entrepris par les travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation en Amérique du Nord. Et, à l'occasion, cela prend la forme d'initiatives moins visibles comme la Journée de lobbying de l'an dernier à Queen's Park, alors que 120 membres d'OSSTF/FEESO de partout en province ont rencontré des députés de tous les partis, y compris des ministres et les chefs de l'Opposition, afin de discuter de la violence en milieu de travail. Cet

effort particulier a été l'occasion d'engagements importants, de la part de la ministre de l'Éducation et du ministre du Travail, de prendre exactement les mesures pour lesquelles nos membres exerçaient des pressions.

Et de toute évidence, au moins une fois tous les quatre ans, l'élection provinciale devient le point de mire des activités politiques de la Fédération. OSSTF/FEESO n'a pas et n'a jamais ni adhéré ni été affilié à aucun parti politique et notre approche à la politique électorale n'a jamais eu pour but de favoriser les intérêts d'un parti politique par rapport à un autre. Elle vise plutôt à promouvoir les intérêts de nos membres et à préserver l'intégrité de l'éducation publique en Ontario. Les décisions quant au parti ou au candidat à soutenir ou non reposent entièrement sur cet objectif. Il est important que les membres individuels d'OSSTF/FEESO comprennent cela lorsqu'ils jugent que leurs allégeances politiques personnelles sont en contradiction avec les stratégies électorales de la Fédération.

Prendre la position que la Fédération ne devrait pas s'impliquer du tout dans la politique électorale, franchement, c'est dire qu'OSSTF/FEESO devrait renoncer à ses responsabilités de protéger les droits et les conditions de travail de ses membres. Près d'un siècle d'expérience nous a démontré maintes et maintes fois que la tendance du gouvernement à Queen's Park peut, et c'est généralement le cas, avoir des conséquences considérables sur la vie des membres d'OSSTF/FEESO.

Jusqu'à quel point l'action politique peut contribuer à la création d'un milieu plus propice dans lequel défendre les intérêts des travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation, il incombera toujours à la Fédération de s'engager dans le processus politique.

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# Economic, social and climate justice

A new resource from OSSTF/FEESO for everyone!



Members of the Economics and Climate Change Work Group break for a photo op while working in conjunction with Canadian economist Jim Stanford (L-R) Matt Giroux, D. 25; Kelly McCarthy, D. 20; Jim Stanford; Seth Bernstein, D. 12; Earl Burt, Provincial Executive liaison and Zoe Flatman, D. 12

Two of the greatest emerging challenges of the future are entwined: our current economic system, and its consumption core, is fueling a climate crisis that may wipe out all of the uneven benefits that have been extracted by it. Can justice—social, economic and climate—be found within capitalism? If not, what might a system that meets these goals look like? And how can we engage our students most powerfully to get them ready for what lies ahead?

Although there is a clear gap in mandatory critical economic literacy curriculum at the high school level, many educators work to plug this gap in different areas of their practice. In 2016, the OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Executive sought to support those educators, and generate interest amongst others who might be inclined to engage, by tabling a motion at the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA) 2016. There, delegates voted to create a Work

Group to “develop curriculum-related materials on the economics of finance and climate change from a social justice perspective that can be used in a number of subject areas in conjunction with the book, *Economics for Everyone: A Short Guide to the Economics of Capitalism*, by Jim Stanford.”

**ECONOMICS  
FOR EVERYONE**  
A CURRICULUM  
RESOURCE BY  
OSSTF/FEESO



Jim Stanford is a Canadian economist and founder of the Progressive Economics Forum. He is currently an advisor to

Canada’s largest private sector union, Unifor. Stanford wrote *Economics For Everyone* in 2008, with a revised edition in 2015. Stanford understands that economics, far from being the sole domain of experts well-versed in complex models incomprehensible to most, is most essentially a social science. Stanford writes, “The economy is too important to be left to the economists. Ordinary people have valuable economic knowledge—knowledge that’s usually ignored by the experts.”

Of course, a conceptual understanding of the history, tools and vernacular at play within capitalism can be invaluable for both assessing this system and visualizing an alternate one.

Once the motion passed at AMPA, the Economics and Climate Change Work Group set about to generate the resource. The Work Group consisted of four educators from across the province (Kelly McCarthy—District 20, Halton;



Matt Giroux—District 25, Ottawa-Carleton; Zoe Flatman—District 12, Toronto and myself, Seth Bernstein, also from District 12), two members of the provincial staff (Rob Dubyk and Gary Fenn), and the Provincial Executive liaison, Treasurer Earl Burt, who was the originator of the idea to connect OSSTF/FEESO, Stanford, and the themes of economics and climate change. The Work Group met about 10 times over two years, recently wrapping up in time to have the resource ready for the 2018–19 school year. We had a chance to consult directly with Stanford a couple of times, enabling us to further map his conceptual ideas into the resource.

On a personal note, I was drawn to the project because I had been using Stanford's book as a core text in an interdisciplinary Grade 12 Economic Justice course that I have been teaching for the past four years in Toronto. When designing the course, I selected *Economics For Everyone* because of its accessibility, its orientation around social justice, including Indigenous rights, and the fact that it is rooted in a critique of Canadian political economics and neoliberalism. It is a great entry point for students, and also provides the opportunity for rich, guided inquiry into more difficult economic concepts.

Drawing on chapters 16–22 of Stanford's book, the

resource pulls Ministry curriculum expectations from a vast array of courses including Food and Nutrition Science, Construction Technology, the Sciences, Law, History, and of course, Business and Economics. It is designed to map onto the various needs of a classroom teacher; it provides stand-alone lessons, assignments that can be cherry-picked, or a unit plan within a course.

Activities include debating the impact of free trade policy in Canada on the economy and the environment. Students can also explore concepts of ethical investing by using a consensus model of decision-making to solve a pension crisis in the fictional community of Oiratno. Another assignment is built around a critique of Ontario's 2016–2020 Climate Action Plan, including having the students conduct research that analyzes both the effectiveness of the plan and how well the government is meeting its targets. Still others revolve around learning about core macroeconomic topics like inflation and the monetary policy levers at the disposal of the Bank of Canada—students consolidate this learning by writing a letter to the bank advising it on future policy directions.

The resource also provides a visually-engaging, guided reading response for each of the *Economics For Everyone* chapters covered by the Work Group,

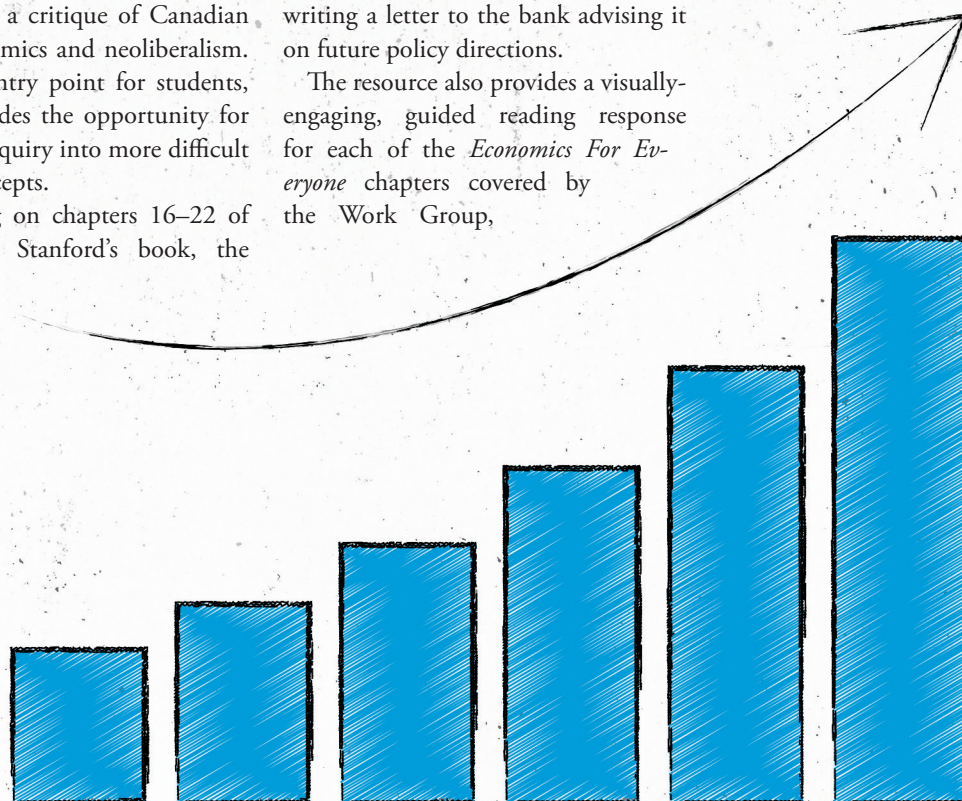
along with a range of different hand-outs connected to key concepts. It is also packed with links to great readings, videos, and other connections for educators to incorporate into their respective courses.

Educators can first access the resource during Summer Leadership, where a workshop will be offered, and it will be made available on the provincial website in time for the start of the 2018–19 school year.

At its core, the resource was written in the same spirit as Stanford's book. Economics is often intimidating not just for students, but for many educators, too—but it can be demystified easily—and made accessible for everyone. The more we break down the barriers for engagement, the better chance we have for a future built on foundations of economic, social and climate justice.

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**Seth Bernstein** is a teacher in District 12, Toronto and is a member of the Economics and Climate Change Work Group.





# The Educators Strike Back

Grassroots collective actions by US educators begin to pay off



Striking school workers hold signs and chant inside the West Virginia Capitol in Charleston, West Virginia, U.S., on Friday, March 2, 2018

Intransigent employers, hostile legislatures, and a pending Supreme Court decision are making prospects for the US labour movement appear grim in the Trump era. The court decision, *Janus vs. the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees*, is expected in June, and could effectively impose so-called ‘right-to-work’ legislation on public sector unions nationally. Yet the grassroots-led strike by the teachers and support staff of West Virginia, over 13 days in February and March, has inspired new hopes.

West Virginia has a proud labour history, but in recent decades, with the decline of the United Mine Workers and rising unemployment, it has become a Republican bastion and a ‘right-to-work’ state. ‘Right-to-work’ has nothing to do with guaranteeing employment. The term refers to legislation enabling employees in unionized workplaces to opt out of paying dues, while continu-

ing to enjoy the benefits and protections of the collective agreement. ‘Right-to-work’ legislation was first implemented in 1947 to help stymie the unionization of workers in the US south by weakening the organizational base of unions. In recent years, pushed by right wing think tanks funded by the billionaire Koch brothers, it has spread to former union bastions in the north including Michigan and Indiana.

Public sector unions in West Virginia are subjected to even more debilitating laws that prevent them from engaging in formal collective bargaining or going on strike. In this context, West Virginia’s funding for education and the broader public sector had entered a race to the bottom with other conservative southern states. But the recent victory of West Virginia’s educators, who won a five per cent pay increase for all state employees and a commitment to remedy the systemic underfunding of their

health benefits plan, has inspired their colleagues across the US south and beyond to exercise their collective power.

In April, I attended a conference of union activists organized by Labor Notes in Chicago. Begun in 1979 as a newsletter bringing together grassroots labour activists from across sectors and borders, Labor Notes’ biennial conference, which this year attracted 3,000 participants, has also become the largest cross-union gathering of teacher activists in North America. The victorious West Virginia teachers and support staff were a central feature of this year’s conference, with hundreds attending sessions featuring activists who shared lessons from their strike.

Despite receiving among the lowest teachers’ salaries in the US for years, leading to hundreds of unfilled vacancies annually across the state, perhaps the final straw came in the form of plans by the state government to drasti-

cally increase benefits co-payments for West Virginia public employees, which would amount to a significant decline in income. Teachers and support staff began organizing school-by-school and county-by-county, with thousands coordinating through Facebook groups. With strong support from parents, as well as from many administrators and superintendents frustrated by the difficulty of attracting and retaining staff, they walked out and picketed the state capitol. With the help of community groups and churches, they ensured that bag lunches remained available for low income students and families to pick up. They didn't return to their schools until it was clear that the hostile Republican legislature could not subvert the deal that was reached by the two teachers' unions and the support staff union with the governor.

Teachers in Oklahoma, whose salaries competed with West Virginia's for last place, were the first to be inspired. Oklahoma is another 'right-to-work' state where many teachers were not part of the union, and organizing began from the bottom up. With the raised expectations of their membership, the state's American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association affiliates announced a walkout for the first week of April to coincide with the state's annual high stakes standardized tests. After a decade without a raise, the average high school teachers' salary was \$42,460. Strikers demand a \$10,000 raise over three years. The Republican legislature has granted \$6,100. With

high numbers of vacancies, the strikers appeared unperturbed by the possibility of reprisals for participating in an illegal strike, stating that they could get jobs nearby in Texas and earn far more.

Strikes subsequently spread to Arizona and Kentucky. Both have abysmal pay, as well as specific issues, such as a Republican scheme in Kentucky to cut cost of living increases to pensioners and a proposal by the Arizona governor to implement school vouchers. In each of these states, legislatures had whittled down public revenue for years through income and corporate tax cuts, and then claimed they could not raise education funding. The leader of West Virginia's Republicans initially claimed that money for salary increases would have to come from slashing social security benefits paid to the state's retirees. Education workers demanded that it come from raising taxes on natural gas fracking and mining. Oklahoma will be raising taxes on oil refineries.

Unlike these southern states, prior to 2011 Wisconsin's public sector workers held union rights comparable to those in Ontario. Wisconsin was actually the first state to grant full collective bargaining rights to public sector unions in 1956. In 2011, Republican governor Scott Walker passed legislation requiring public sector unions to hold recertification votes every year (with non-voters counting as a "no"). He also banned strikes and limited collective bargaining gains to salary increases up to the cost of living. Membership in the Wisconsin

## Unlike these southern states, prior to 2011 Wisconsin's public sector workers held union rights comparable to those in Ontario.

Teachers' Association has since declined from 98,000 to 29,000. With dedicated member organizing and creative public campaigns on issues important to their members as well as to students and their families, some locals, like the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association, have managed to avoid this drastic decline.

At the Labor Notes' conference, a special education teacher from Milwaukee, serving as her union's vice president, tearfully explained that immediately following the loss of collective bargaining rights, the state implemented "the biggest cuts to the education budget in the history of Wisconsin." Annual member pay and benefits was slashed by \$10,000. A school voucher program led to the proliferation of shoddy storefront 'credit mills,' often staffed by uncertified teachers, and the closure of dozens of public schools. At the school level, teachers say the balance of power has shifted to favour bully principals. They had lost nearly all of their prep time to daily staff meetings and PD. They were now quietly organizing their own walkouts. An educational assistant from Milwaukee summed up her anger over seven years of losses: "We want it all back."

The experience of Wisconsin is a cautionary tale with particular relevance for OSSTF/FEESO members. Well established, strong unions, and the public education system itself, can be diminished or even dismantled with shocking speed by a government committed to an anti-labour ideology.

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**Paul Bocking** is an occasional teacher in District 12, Toronto and is the 2nd Vice President and Chief Negotiator of the Occasional Teachers' Bargaining Unit.





# A step in the left direction

Victories for working people spark backlash from business



On July 10, 2017, I spent an hour in front of the City of Hamilton's General Issues Committee answering questions from Hamilton City Councilors about a motion I was proposing to have the Council send a letter to the Ontario government in support of Ontario's Bill 148 (*Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*). To be clearer, I spent an hour responding to concerns about how certain councilors had been assured that a raise in the minimum wage would spell certain doom for small businesses and franchisees in the province. Indeed, question after question referenced anecdotal assurances from the business community about the proposed \$14 and \$15/hour minimum wage jumps.

No more than two minutes of that hour were spent on paid leave days or wage equity for temporary workers. No discussion on any of the advancements for the labour movement as a whole. Very little consideration, other than a

response from me, as to how such a Bill was a step out of poverty for over 70,000 Hamiltonians who not only made less than the proposed new increase but could avail themselves of a whole host of new protections under the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Labour Relations Act*.

Instead, almost the entire hour was expended on concerns about how Tim Hortons' franchisees were seething and how their employees apparently wanted to continue to make lower wages.

In the end, after a few months of staff reports, a low-turnout tie vote to defeat the recommendation, and a saving reconsideration between the General Issues Committee and the following Council meeting, Hamilton's City Council did endorse Bill 148 by a vote of 11–5.

Symbolic? Yes. Important for a city with some of the highest pockets of urban poverty in the province and the

country? Most definitely.

While Bill 148 can certainly be seen as a hefty (albeit risky) piece of electioneering by an unpopular Ontario Liberal Party during the lead up to the June 2018 election, let us not pretend that the wins contained in this Bill for working class Ontarians were the result of magnanimous underpinnings on behalf of Kathleen Wynne and Kevin Flynn. Every single concession from the Ontario government was wrangled over agonizing years by the \$15 and Fairness movement and the affiliates of the Ontario Federation Labour during their *Make It Fair* campaign. These victories were the result of unionized and non-unionized workers coming together as a unified working class to put incredible pressure on the provincial government.

That said, Bill 148 (in its final form) was far from perfect legislation, and there will still be much work to do in reversing decades of dwindling worker/la-



**It becomes far more sensible and efficient, for the purposes of employee retention and reducing orientations and training, to hold onto the employees you have and start to treat them better.**

bour rights if we're going to properly address the current job market's challenges regarding precarity and the constant threats of globalization to our economy.

But how about that Tim Hortons thing?

I suppose I should have been more prescient in listening to the one Hamilton City Councillor who pressed insistently about the complaints of Tim Hortons' franchisees. Who would've guessed that the venerable purveyor of deep fried, flash frozen sugar cakes and weak bean juice would play such an integral part in the immediate fallout of a \$14/hour minimum wage increase on January 1, 2018?

While Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade warned of impending doom at the thought of having to pay an employee something close to a living wage, it was Timmy's that quickly stole the limelight with examples of how *not* to treat employees who just started making the higher minimum wage. Reports began to roll up from all rims of the province about nixing a standard "free" take home coffee or cruller at the end of shifts. In an even crueler twist, paid breaks had been converted to unpaid breaks, or two (previously paid) 15-minute breaks were being combined into one half hour unpaid "lunch." Franchisees were blaming the Brazilian parent company, Restaurant Brands International (RBI), and claimed that the controls on menu pricing were not allowing them to adjust for the new legislation. RBI publicly condemned franchisees for employing anti-worker tactics. In the end, Tim Hortons slipped from Canada's 4th most trusted brand in 2017 to 50th in April of this year.

Tim Hortons wasn't alone, however. Reports started coming in through activist tip lines and websites of other

employers who were exercising a host of "workarounds" intended to recover the cost of their new obligations directly from the wallets of their workers. Some examples, mostly (but not exclusively) from the food services sector, included:

- Increasing the clawback on tip pooling by 20% for servers and illegally including some management team members in the tip pool.
- Clawing back tips completely.
- Cutting hours and shifts to make jobs more precarious.
- Immediate cuts to benefits, pensions or unilateral worker contribution increases to maintain current benefits.

What followed the eventual passage and royal assent of Bill 148 was an onslaught of radio talk show hosts inviting small business owners on-air to wring their hands over the demise of their businesses and lament that they would never be able to survive this increase to \$14/hour, much less the 2019 bump to \$15/hour. In the time since the implementation of the Bill however, jobs numbers have gone up. Let us not fool ourselves that the nature of precarity inherent to those jobs has changed.

Just as many jobs are still shift-to-shift and week-to-week, but at least the workers in those jobs are able to pay a few more bills, buy a few more groceries, and maybe, just maybe, work two jobs instead of three, or three instead of four.

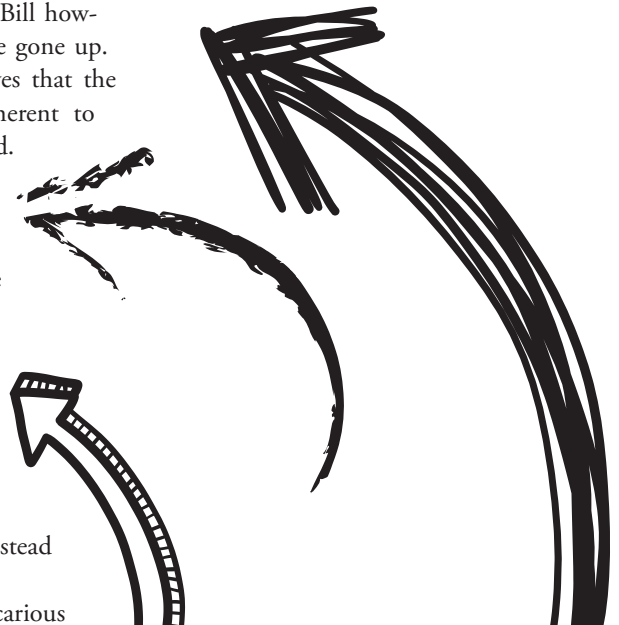
The hope is that precarious

work will eventually evolve into more secure employment. Inherent in the nature of an increased wage is a reduced need to create a low-waged "temp" culture in a workplace, because the temporary workers will be making the same money as permanent staff. In fact, it becomes far more sensible and efficient, for the purposes of employee retention and reducing orientations and training, to hold onto the employees you have and start to treat them better.

Over the course of several months, many politicians, the Chamber of Commerce, and several Tim Hortons' franchise owners challenged my support of Bill 148's labour advances and the minimum wage increases. I developed a common answer to anyone who came to me and said, "this is going to cost jobs," "this will ruin the economy" or "We're barely scraping by as it is—we'll have to close this franchise within the year." Quite simply, if a corporation has been exploiting workers for below poverty wages up until Bill 148, shame on them, and if anyone's business plan relies on profiteering from workers living in poverty, it is an unethical business plan.

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**Anthony Marco** is a teacher in District 21, Hamilton-Wentworth and is the President of the Hamilton and District Labour Council.



# Journal clubs...with biscuits

Educators engaging with education research



Research in education...that is research on how students learn and how best to teach...is out there. How that research gets into the hands of educators and how it ever informs their practice is a challenge facing all of us involved in education.

Beth Greville-Giddings, a teaching assistant at Westbury Academy in Nottingham, England, thinks she has a solution: journal clubs. It's a relatively simple idea and it has already proven effective in another field. As she explains, "Journal clubs are essentially book clubs for reading research, and anyone can take part in them. They were originally used in medicine for doctors in training then as continual professional development as they are working to keep up to date with research that is out there."

Ben Goldacre, author of *The Guardian's* weekly column "Bad Science" and the book by the same name, inspired Greville-Giddings when he talked about

the use of journal clubs as part of his keynote speech at a 2013 *researchED* conference. "While their roots were in training medical students, now they are more so used to develop critical analysis skills and they are increasingly being used in education," says Greville-Giddings, although she is quick to add, "I am not the first to have started a journal club."

And while she may not be the first person in the field of education to start a journal club at a school, she is certainly one of the most enthusiastic promoters of the practice. She has presented on journal clubs at many *researchED* conferences and has been responsible for inspiring many schools to begin their own. But like everyone, she started out small.

"I began one at my school with a few people and anyone could join. Teachers, teaching assistants, and even people in the office showed some inter-

est. We would select an article in advance around a particular topic. Often it would be quite specific. One person would act as a facilitator and lead the meeting and give a summary of the article, and then everyone discussed their understanding of it. We would discuss the features of the article, and whether or not we agreed or disagreed with its premise. We would also discuss whether we see any biases in the research. We would also talk about how the article could inform our current practices and how it related to the work we were doing with our students."

Greville-Giddings is quite open about how difficult it can be to initially attract participants to a journal club, and she attributes this to educators' lack of experience with research papers, "Research literature can be quite intimidating for people who are not familiar with it. In the past I have used research summaries, blog posts and things like that, but



people seem to like to use the actual article itself.”

As the facilitator of the journal club at her school, Greville-Giddings tries to make the club as welcoming as possible, “I don’t think a journal club is the place to categorically decide whether a policy needs to be abolished or whether a practice needs to be changed. Instead, if you see an idea that you think is good and you think it has potential, a journal club is a place where it can be explored further. The atmosphere is quite relaxed and it’s a social way of engaging with research. It’s enjoyable and professionally rewarding.” She also adds, “I’m not above bribing people with biscuits either.”

So what does a journal club look like? According to Greville-Giddings, it’s at least three or four (hopefully more) people sitting around a table, papers in hand, having a chat and scribbling some notes. She recommends that every group have a facilitator—it doesn’t have to be the same person every time—who has read the article and is prepared to keep the conversation going with questions and prompts. Apparently not everyone that shows up for journal club has necessarily read the selected research article, but they are always welcomed and provided with a copy of the article.

Greville-Giddings manages a website ([www.edujournalclub.com](http://www.edujournalclub.com)) that includes resources to help run a journal club. She also offers the following advice on how to manage a journal club:

- keep going with it; initially you might not have much interest, but you will find like minds
- find some dedicated space and time to hold your journal club and promote it
- start with general topics and listen to participants’ interests to find new ones
- take notes, share them and produce a record that can be accessed
- get your administration on board to support the initiative

When it comes to finding suitable articles, she suggests:

- Google Scholars offers many articles in easy to use PDF format
- Free access articles are often available for a short time after publication
- Individual journals will often have some free articles available online
- Subscribe to journals or join organizations that produce journals that you are interested in
- Many school libraries have subscriptions to journals that contain articles on research in education

Greville-Giddings is adamant that even though journal clubs examine serious research, the discussion doesn’t need to be overly serious. She quotes an article by an expert in knowledge mobilization who writes that sometimes research is ready to be shared, but it’s not actually ready to be implemented. “You can’t directly measure the impact that a journal club or the research they discuss has on one’s students,” she admits, “but as part of the bigger picture of research engagement, having a journal club gives educators the opportunity to become more research literate.”

Greville-Giddings also warns that “there is a risk in education that research engagement becomes elitist. There is a real risk of educators feeling excluded from it.” Journal clubs makes education research accessible to everyone.

“The hope is that journal club discussions will make educators more aware of the research that is out there. It won’t necessarily completely develop people’s critical analysis skills in a formal way, but hopefully it will entice them to think more critically about an idea when it is presented to them.”

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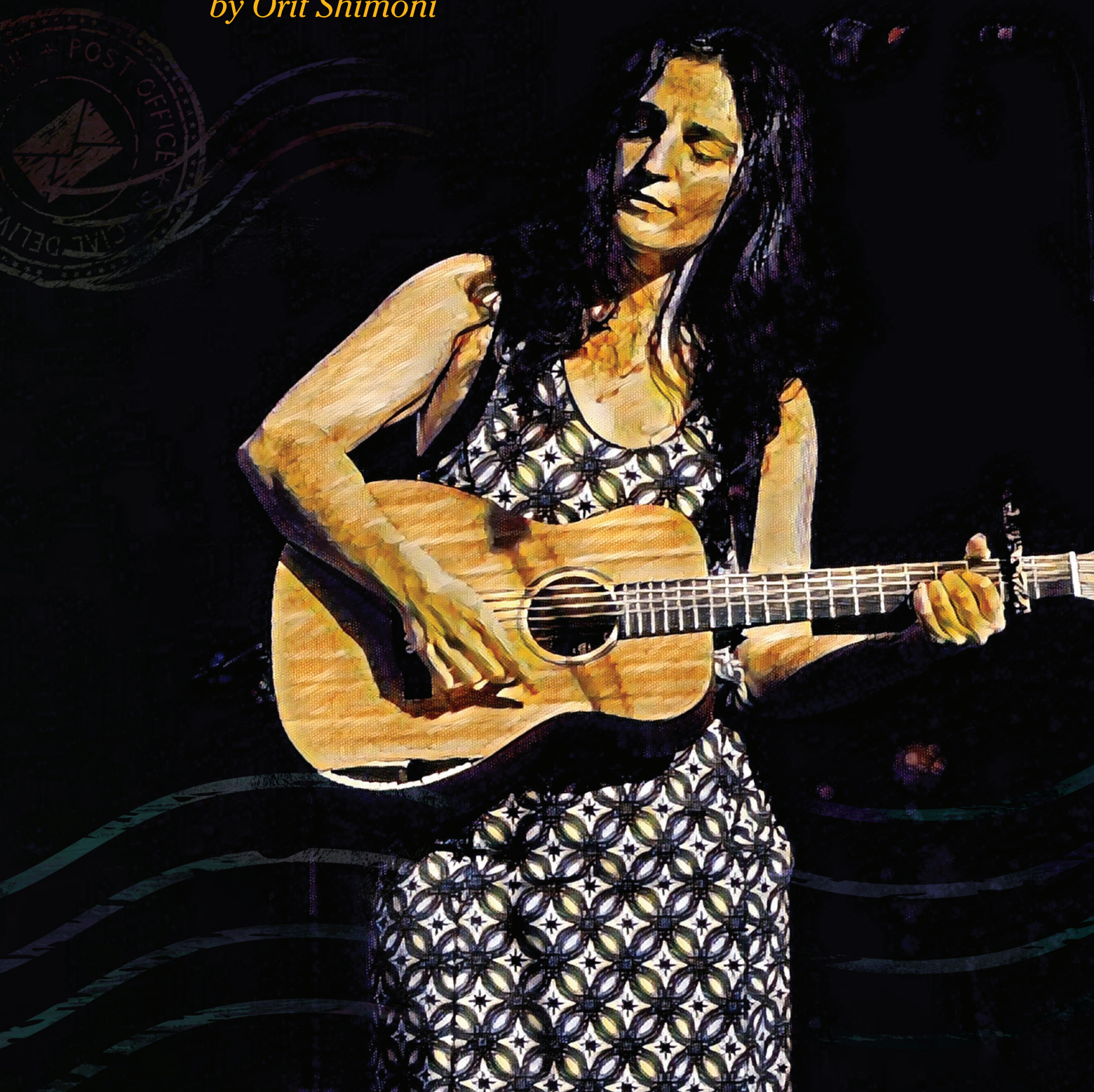




# ***Lessons from the road***

*What life as a touring musician  
has taught a former teacher*

*by Orit Shimoni*





Nearly ten years ago, I stood in the principal's office to discuss my resignation. It was formulated as a one-year leave of absence we both knew was just a goodbye in the polite costume of a maybe. It was a departure from an eight-year teaching career I truly loved and was choked up about letting go of. I told her that the messages I was trying to inspire in the classroom, I believed I could get out faster and wider through my music. I guess this sounded a little too idealistic, or downright delusional, because she thought I was lying and secretly going to work in another school. I was dead serious.

I had just completed a master's degree in theological studies, an admittedly strange choice for a secular woman, but it was the only department I could find that let me explore my notions about the structural connections between ethics, language and symbol. My exploration, I felt, might address the political violence I had lived through in Jerusalem in my twenties, my educational passion, and my creative artistic endeavours. I was not wrong.

My graduate work allowed me to articulate my methodology as a teacher, but it also gave me the permission I felt I needed to pursue singing and songwriting without thinking it too self-indulgent and narcissistic. Using linguistic philosophy, philosophy of ethics and theology, I claimed and tried to prove that the most ethical form of communication is metaphor, and that we can learn from metaphor how to exist ethically in the world. My definition of "ethical" came from the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who claimed that ethics was not a set of moral rules, and that, in fact, claiming to *know* ethics as such was wrong and dangerous, both in personal and socio-political realms. Instead, he suggested that ethics was an event rather than a body of knowledge, and the event was the encounter with the "other," who was always outside our capacity to fully know.

I demonstrated in my thesis how with "plain" language there is an implicitly one-way transfer of knowledge from speaker to listener, but with metaphor,

there is an explicit invitation to the "other" to participate in the interpretation of meaning. This invitation to participate, open rather than closed, was what made it ethical.

This had profound practical applications to the student-teacher-knowledge dynamic. I argued academically what I had experienced personally. Being open to the always-new encounter with students meant that if I wanted to be an ethical teacher on Levinas's terms, it meant I couldn't come to the classroom thinking I knew what was right, or good, or even important. I could suggest it, open it to question, but I needed to find ways to engage the students to participate in the meaning of those terms, creating them as we went, taking their input into account.

I had no idea what would happen when I stepped out of the school-system I'd been in since I was in the first grade myself, into the great abyss of full-time artistry. It did not occur to me that, though I had songs of supposed wisdom to share and some strongly-felt theoretical convictions, I would immediately become the student par excellence. As a classroom teacher I already held on very lovingly to the notion that my students taught me as much as I taught them, but the learning curve I suddenly found myself on was radical, and everything I believed in from the teacher's perspective was now being put to the test.

I had absolutely no idea what I was doing, no skill set to administer it. I had one album out and some shows under my belt, a strangely prolific outpouring of songs and some spirited defiance in the face of notions that I couldn't be a full-time musician. Since making that leap, in what turned out to be a decade of living on the road full time, I have lived with no fixed address, constantly out of a suitcase, travelling



back and forth across Canada and Europe by bus and train (I have never learned how to drive), living in people's homes for a day or two, or a week or two, booking my own performances, learning to communicate with media for interviews and album reviews, and accepting recording offers and navigating the diverse world of studio gear, engineers, and co-producers. I have been not only open to the "other," I have been at its mercy. It has been challenging, dizzying, rewarding and enthralling.

The only reason I have survived, and in non-mainstream ways, even succeeded, has had to do with an extreme openness to "the other," and my admitting from the get go that asking "is it so?" is better than proclaiming, "it is so." Everything I have learned in ten years on the road would undoubtedly serve both me and my students if I return to teaching. The lessons have served me as a human being who believes in small and large-scale authentic, loving community-building. And these lessons have had everything to do with my humbling encounters with "the other."

A few months into my first year, after a bizarre and anxiety-filled autumn where I watched back-to-school ads that for the first time did not pertain to me, I ended up moving to Berlin. I spoke no German. One of the first things I noticed was that my confident independence suddenly disappeared. I needed help from other people, translating the world around me, filling out forms, navigating the subway system.

Simple tasks like going to the grocery store were extremely frustrating and demoralising. I kept turning the tins of food around in my hand expecting the English ingredients to appear, but there were none. I could not decipher my basic surroundings.

I had taught second language for eight years, first English, then Hebrew. I leaned toward whole-language learning, and had enthusiastically explained to my students that they did not have to understand every word in order to make educated guesses. But for the first time in my life I understood the fear involved in this. I thought back to my students who had been weaker linguistically and the frozen glares they would have when confronted with an entire text. I recalled their disheartened sighs when I would circle the mistakes on their assignments, even though I always tried to encourage them by highlighting the passages they had handled correctly. For the first time in my life I understood what it meant to feel inadequate and clumsy in both comprehension and expression.

A retrospective empathy I had not had opened up in me. The effect of this loss of confidence was so all-encompassing I even witnessed my body posture change from the confident, straight-backed 'go-getter' woman I had been, to a slumped and shuffling unsure entity. Though I had understood cerebrally that weaker communication skills would feel like a barrier to enthusiastic participation, I had never experienced it directly.

Learning to

engage in baby steps, to celebrate my small linguistic and administrative accomplishments, to accept encouragement from my friends and to see my inadequacy with humour were all pivotal aspects of my confidence-recovery. I thought about how I would apply this if I returned to teaching. I thought about how much the ability to engage and communicate had to do with our sense of worth in our community, and how it was precisely a caring, patient, encouraging community that was needed in order to facilitate it, for it was only through the help of newfound friends that I progressed.

The diversity of the community around me was in and of itself a humbling experience. Hearing multiple voices was imperative. I heard Germans speak of the problem of the Turkish population not integrating, and then heard Turkish people speak of the problem of Germans not letting them integrate. I wondered what awareness they had of each other's position. I wondered what kind of classroom discussion I would facilitate if they had been my students rather than people in the city at large.

The diversity, of course, extended beyond cultures and ethnicities. In one particularly poignant encounter, a woman approached me after one of my bar-room performances. She was immediately annoying and fatiguing. She talked too much and too fast, and though most of the people at the venue approached me to briefly congratulate me on my

show, this woman occupied my space and did not let go. She asked me, between a

barrage of sentences, how to make an F chord on the guitar and if I could show her, right then and there. Her frenetic energy made me uncomfortable and I looked for nice ways to say it wasn't something I could do in a noisy bar.

When I returned to my rented room and checked my messages, I saw that she had sent me a MySpace request. MySpace was the site-du-jour on which you could have either a musical or a personal profile. It was a way of connecting and networking before Facebook and Twitter had really taken off. I glanced at her profile and giggled because what would normally have been a quaint paragraph describing oneself was, in her case, a rambling monologue which read the way her talking had sounded at the bar. But as I got to the end of it I came across the line, "I have A.D.D." I suddenly gulped in shame. Somehow, to my own dismay, it had never occurred to me that the special-needs students I advocated for so passionately grow up into adults that I would interact with in the world outside the classroom.

Remembering my love for my students helped me navigate a world of adult versions of special-needs, or at the very least, overly intoxicated adults who frequented the bars I performed in. This two-way vision, the memory of my special-needs students and my encounters with special-needs adults, often considered nuisances at performances, enhanced an overall compassion in me and a sense of responsibility in demonstrating both love and boundary.

As with teaching, performing at a venue meant all eyes were on me when someone was disruptive or rude. How to be inclusive was less of a given



when it didn't involve children I was being paid to teach, but it remained a goal in mind at all times, and it always came down to creating space to listen and let others express themselves, even at the "expense" of my own show. And sometimes it meant that the people in the venue had to work together to resolve the outburst. I used to do that in my classroom as well, deciding together what was acceptable and unacceptable for the group.

After eight months in Berlin, I returned to Canada but no longer had an apartment. I had a two-month tour booked and figured I would look for one after that, but while on tour it occurred to me that if I kept touring, I didn't actually need one, or at least, there was no real point in paying for one and then constantly looking for sub-letters. On tour, I stayed with various friends, friends of friends, and strangers I carefully selected on a couch-surfing website.

Being in different homes constantly and wanting to be a good guest who would be welcomed back meant paying very close attention to the household norms. I could not just behave habitually. I could not have my own code of household conduct. I was attentive to many details and nuances of schedules, dishes, food, drink, degrees of cleanliness, background noises, types and topics of conversation. I answered many questions about myself, but I also asked many of my hosts. I looked for and found ways to participate.

The more people I have met and interacted with, the more "others," the more I have understood that everyone has their skills and convictions and struggles, and that the most important skill is patient listening, caring communication. This means asking it of others and providing it back. And indeed, since the path I have embarked on is a musical one, patient listening and caring communication is at the core of it all. The songs themselves, they are my curriculum.

How do we build ethically relevant curriculum and how do we share it most effectively? These should be, as far as I'm concerned, the two primary questions of anyone involved in education. The questions are the same, I believe, for anyone who takes creative art seriously. Are my songs ethically relevant, ethically delivered, and potentially ethically inspiring? I cannot answer those questions without asking my audiences. We cannot answer those questions of curriculum without asking our students.

Of all the thoughts that I have in my head, most of them are questions and musings about identity, and they can range from noting a food preference or having a favourite fragrance, from trying to choose my reaction to having stubbed my toe, to questioning where I stand on a political matter, or how I am processing any one of my multitude of interpersonal experiences. I witness my reactions and behaviours and I listen to my thoughts out of a sincere desire to know myself, and to better myself. But I only ever identify a thought as song-worthy when I feel it speaks as much to the greater human experience as it does of my own personal one. When I catch myself thinking, feeling or doing something and suddenly smiling because, "ah, that is so human," that's when I figure I should write it and share it.

I believe the talent of the artist is to intuit this kind of resonance and act on it, and in sharing it, create even greater resonance. I believe, and so I wrote in my graduate thesis, that the reason art, its songs and symbols are particularly effective in transmitting these insights, is precisely because they are not prescriptive. If you stand there with an "I know this," attitude and talk at an audience you presume doesn't know it yet, if you see them as passive receivers of your insight, you are denying them actual participation in the revelation. But art, by definition and, more importantly, by intention, is interactive in meaning-generating. It is an invitation to participate. How do we translate this to teaching?

The best way to enhance one's intuition as to what is human is to lis-

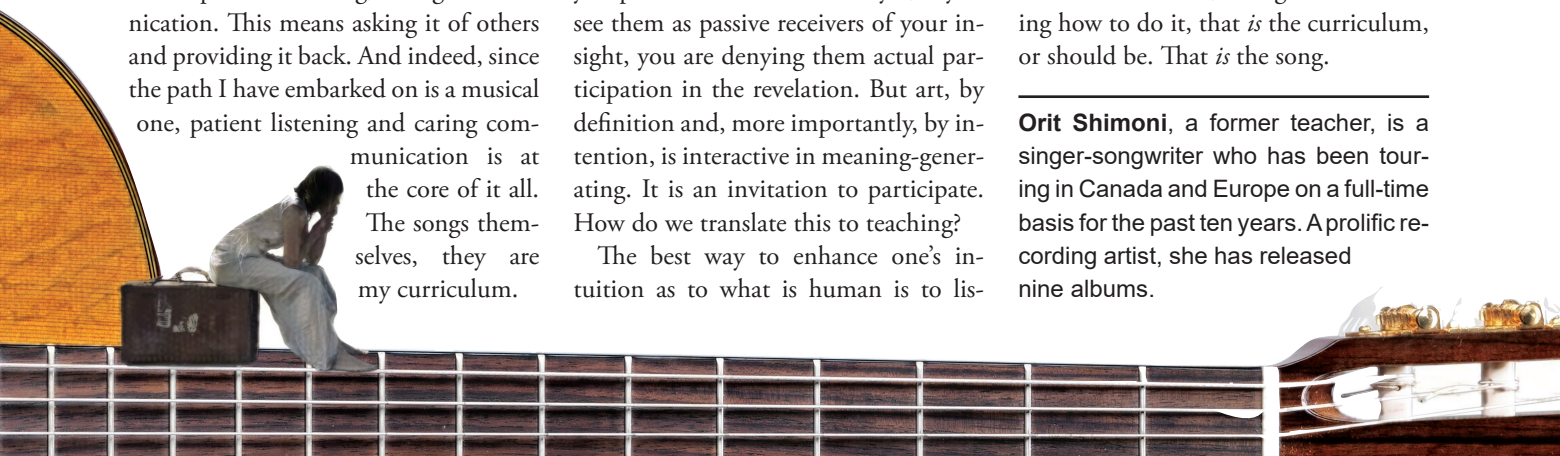
ten very carefully, both to one's own thoughts and to the utterances of others. I would never be able to generate songs at the rate that I do, nine albums out and two more recorded, without intentionally and actively participating in this focused kind of listening. Ten years on the road have given me an astounding collection of stories and conversations with very different types of people in very different types of places, and these have generated more ideas and insights in me about what it means to be human. There is no question in my mind that this has inspired me greatly and enhanced my ability to write human songs.

I've thought a great deal over the years about what student-centred learning means, and years of sharing songs with diverse audiences have made me understand it in sharper focus. I sing thanks to my audiences, I write songs because of them, and when I sing them my songs, they mean what they mean to each listener based on their own interpretations. When they share these interpretations back with me, sometimes in facial expressions, smiles and tears, and sometimes in words, I am moved by the enhancement of meaning, and I am stirred to write more songs.

If we can stand as teachers in our classrooms with a sincere desire to facilitate, rather than present ethical curriculum, if we understand that ethical relevance is generated and determined in real time by the students as much as by us, and if we can be flexible and keep creating lessons based on their engaged feedback, then we become educational artists. The skill of listening in an engaged way, the skill of concise, relevant articulation with an openness to interpretation and more conversation, doing it *and* teaching how to do it, that *is* the curriculum, or should be. That *is* the song.

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**Orit Shimoni**, a former teacher, is a singer-songwriter who has been touring in Canada and Europe on a full-time basis for the past ten years. A prolific recording artist, she has released nine albums.







# COURSE CORRECTION FIXING **A FLAWED FUNDING FORMULA**

by Erika Shaker and  
Trish Hennessey

When Mike Harris's Conservative government implemented Ontario's education funding formula in 1997 it was intended, by design, to squeeze funding for the system and to centralize control at the provincial level. It was based on the politics of division, pitting the educational needs of students and the need for infrastructure upgrades of schools against financial compensation of teachers and the power of local school boards.

While many of the benchmarks used to derive board-by-board funding allocations varied between arbitrary and totally inexplicable, two of the major benchmarks—teachers' salaries and the allocation of \$5.20 per square foot for building operations and maintenance—were well below most boards' costs and imposed financial pressures on higher-spending boards. It also codified in funding restrictions the government's lack of respect for locally elected school boards and its distrust in their decision-making. And while it emphasized equality in funding for all boards, it did so by squeezing funding for big-

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# CHANGEMENT DE CAP RÉTABLIR **UNE FORMULE DE FINANCEMENT DÉFICIENTE**

par Erika Shaker et  
Trish Hennessey

En 1997, lorsque le gouvernement Conservateur de Mike Harris a mis en place la formule de financement de l'éducation en Ontario, elle visait, en raison de sa conception, à réduire le financement du système et à centraliser le contrôle au palier provincial. Elle s'inspirait d'une politique de division, opposant les besoins en matière d'éducation des élèves et la nécessité de moderniser l'infrastructure des écoles contre la rémunération du personnel enseignant et les pouvoirs des conseils scolaires locaux.

Bien qu'un grand nombre des repères utilisés pour établir les allocations de financement de chaque conseil variaient entre arbitraires et totalement inexplicables, deux des principaux repères, soit les salaires du personnel enseignant et l'allocation de 5,20 \$ par pied carré pour le fonctionnement et l'entretien des bâtiments, étaient bien en deçà des coûts encourus par la plupart des conseils et ont imposé des contraintes financières à ceux dont les dépenses étaient les plus élevées. La formule a également codifié l'absence de respect du gouvernement envers les conseils scolaires élus localement et sa méfiance à l'égard de leur prise de décisions en les transposant en restrictions financières. Et bien qu'elle faisait valoir l'égalité en matière de financement de tous les conseils scolaires, elle le réalisait en restreignant les fonds des plus grands conseils et (ou) ceux étant mieux financés.

Le ton politique a changé avec l'élection d'un gouvernement Libéral en 2003 et la promesse de Dalton McGuinty,

*/suite à la page 21*

Artwork: Audrey Bourque

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ger and/or better-financed boards.

The political tone changed with the election of a Liberal government in 2003 and the promise from then Premier Dalton McGuinty to become the Education Premier. And it's true there have been positive changes to the system. Class sizes are smaller, which is good for both educators and students. Funding for special student support services has increased. And Ontario was the first province in Canada to implement full-day kindergarten based on early learning principles for four- and five-year-olds, inspiring others to follow suit.

But in spite of these changes, the education funding formula has not been revisited. Indeed, its last review, by Mordechai Rozanski, was back in 2002. And as a result, 20 years after it was first implemented, many of its key functions which are at the heart of the core challenges to Ontario's education system remain in place.

Case in point—school closures have been paused, but not ended, still looming large for many communities. Deferred maintenance continues to be a huge concern. Special needs funding is still inadequate to meet the full range of students' needs or provide educators and education workers with the training and resources to do so. As Hugh Mackenzie points out, kids are entitled to support under the special education act—but not the funding that pays for that support.

The gaps manifest as safety concerns (not limited to special needs), unmonitored lunch breaks, parent volunteers for recess, fundraising campaigns that privilege some schools and communities over others, and longer than optimal bus rides. Some school boards play shell games as a workaround to an inadequate funding formula, much in the same way that school communities try to make do by volunteering and fundraising. But none of these are solutions.

Here are five of the worst aspects of the funding formula (many of which were confirmed by the findings of the 2017 Ontario Auditor General Report) that must be addressed:

**A one-size-fits-all funding for school operations and maintenance:** Since day one of the education funding formula, there has been an inadequate recognition of the true operation and maintenance costs of schools because the whole premise was based on a political choice to cut public school spending in order to deliver an expensive tax cut agenda. That has led to a massive accumulated deferred maintenance backlog and a crisis in school conditions. We recommend targets and timelines to eliminate the maintenance backlog. We also recommend more adequate funding to address the shortfall in operation funding and to support community hub goals, such as after-hours in-school community programs.

**Inadequate funding for students:**

The political choice to squeeze education spending in order to fund tax cuts in the mid-1990s resulted in an education funding formula that, from the outset, deprived programs like special needs, physical education, music, art, drama, and library services of adequate funding. Built into the funding formula was a bias against special needs and against liberal arts education, and this has yet to be redressed. The one-size-fits-all approach to per-student funding isn't working. Schools in well-off neighbourhoods have well-resourced parents that they can rely on to privately fundraise to fill some of the gaps, but this has fuelled inequities in the system. We recommend a more inclusive, needs-based approach to education funding in future.

**Lack of attention to equity issues:**

At a systems level and at an individual level, the funding formula reinforces and perpetuates the substantial disparities between large urban public school boards, inner city vs. suburban neighbourhoods, as well as rural and Northern boards. Chronic underfunding leads to competition for scarce resources and fails to address inequities based on income, gender, race, newcomer status, Indigenous status, and people with special needs. The original funding formula was purposely insensitive to the needs

of diverse classrooms. The new funding formula should embrace inclusiveness as a priority.

**Top down control:**

In addition to assuming central control over the total funding available to every school board in the province, the Harris government imposed a series of restrictions on how that funding could be spent, reinforced lines of accountability between school boards' directors of education and the provincial ministry, and required boards to submit an extremely detailed annual accounting of the sources and uses of their funding. A refusal to explicitly recognize the role of schools as community hubs and an inflexible, top-down approach to school use led to waves of school closures across the province and hampered planning for new development in areas undergoing demographic change. Inadequate base funding continues to contribute to school closure decisions.

**Equal funding, instead of addressing inequities:**

A focus on equality in funding rather than equity in funding was one of the hallmarks of the approach introduced by the Harris government in 1997. Equal funding appears to be fair—every student gets the same support, every school gets the same funding, driven by the numbers of students it serves. The problem with equal funding is that it implicitly assumes that underlying needs and costs are the same, when they are clearly not. Demands on Toronto inner city schools will be fundamentally different than demands on a rural school that is the community hub, and yet struggles to stay open. The Harris government's insistence on equality as the basis for funding remains essentially unchanged. It's time to address the inequities in the system.

There's no question that we need a review of Ontario's education funding formula to determine how it must be redesigned so that it adequately funds our schools. Furthermore, we need to commit to further reviews ev-

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/suite de la page 19

premier ministre de l'époque, de devenir le premier ministre de l'Éducation. Il est vrai que des changements positifs ont été apportés au système. Les effectifs de classe ont baissé, ce qui est à la fois bénéfique pour les éducatrices, les éducateurs et les élèves. Le financement des services de soutien aux élèves ayant des besoins particuliers a augmenté. De plus, l'Ontario a été la première province au Canada à mettre en place la maternelle et le jardin d'enfants à temps plein d'après les principes de l'apprentissage de la petite enfance pour les enfants de quatre et cinq ans, inspirant les autres instances à suivre l'exemple.

Mais malgré ces changements, la formule de financement de l'éducation n'a pas été révisée. En fait, sa dernière révision, par Mordechai Rozanski, remonte à 2002. Par conséquent, 20 ans après le début de sa mise en œuvre, plusieurs de ses fonctions fondamentales se trouvant au cœur des défis principaux du système éducatif de l'Ontario sont toujours en vigueur.

À titre d'exemple, on a suspendu la fermeture d'écoles, mais on n'y a pas mis fin, toujours largement menaçante dans de nombreuses communautés. L'entretien des infrastructures, continuellement remis à plus tard, demeure une préoccupation de taille. Le financement de l'enfance en difficulté reste inadéquat pour répondre au grand éventail de besoins des enfants ou pour fournir au personnel enseignant et aux travailleurs en éducation la formation et les ressources pour y parvenir. Comme Hugh Mackenzie le souligne, les enfants sont en droit de recevoir le soutien dont ils ont besoin en vertu de la *Loi sur l'éducation de l'enfance en difficulté*, mais pas le financement qui couvre ce soutien.

Les écarts se manifestent en préoccupations en matière de sécurité (celles-ci ne se limitant pas aux besoins particuliers), en des pauses-repas sans surveillance, à ce que des parents aient à se porter volontaires pour surveiller les récréations, en des campagnes de levée de fonds qui avantagent certaines écoles et communautés par rapport à d'autres et en des trajets en autobus bien plus longs

que ce qu'ils devraient l'être. Certains conseils scolaires ont à faire des tours de passe-passe afin de pallier une formule de financement inadéquate, de la même façon que les communautés scolaires essaient de s'accommoder par du bénévolat et des collectes de fonds. Mais rien de cela n'est une solution.

Voici cinq des pires aspects de la formule de financement (plusieurs d'entre eux ont été confirmés par les conclusions du Rapport de 2017 de la vérificatrice générale de l'Ontario) qui doivent être réglés :

### **Un financement identique pour le fonctionnement et l'entretien des écoles :**

Depuis le premier jour de la formule de financement de l'éducation, les véritables frais de fonctionnement et d'entretien des écoles n'ont pas été reconnus de manière adéquate, parce que le principe en lui-même se fondait sur un choix politique de réduire les dépenses des écoles publiques afin de pouvoir offrir un programme coûteux de réduction d'impôts. Ceci a engendré une accumulation massive de réparations non exécutées et une crise dans les conditions scolaires. Nous recommandons de créer des objectifs ayant des échéances à respecter afin d'éliminer ce retard dans les travaux d'entretien. Nous recommandons également un financement plus important visant à résoudre le manque à gagner dans le financement lié au fonctionnement et à favoriser les objectifs des carrefours communautaires, comme ceux des programmes communautaires après les heures de classe dans les écoles.

### **Financement inadéquat destiné aux élèves :**

Le choix politique de réduire considérablement les dépenses en éducation pour pouvoir financer des réductions d'impôts au milieu des années 90 a engendré une formule de financement de l'éducation qui, dès le départ, a privé de fonds adéquats certains services comme ceux de l'enfance en difficulté, de l'éducation physique, de la musique, des arts, du théâtre et de bibliothèque. Intégré dans la formule de financement

se trouvait un penchant marqué contre l'éducation de l'enfance en difficulté et l'enseignement des arts libéraux et cela n'a toujours pas été corrigé. La méthode de financement par élève identique pour tous ne fonctionne pas. Les écoles des beaux quartiers ont des parents qui ne manquent pas de ressources et peuvent compter sur eux pour obtenir des fonds privés afin de combler certaines lacunes. Par contre, ceci n'a fait qu'accroître les inégalités au sein du système. À l'avenir, nous recommandons que le financement de l'éducation suive une méthode plus inclusive et basée davantage en fonction des besoins.

### **Manque de considération des questions relatives à l'équité :**

Du point de vue du système et à l'échelle individuelle, la formule de financement accentue et perpétue les disparités substantielles entre les grands conseils scolaires publics urbains, ceux des grandes villes contre ceux des banlieues, de même que pour les conseils scolaires en milieu rural et du Nord de l'Ontario. Une insuffisance de financement chronique conduit à une concurrence pour obtenir des ressources déjà rares et ne règle pas les inégalités fondées sur le revenu, le genre, la race, la situation de nouvel arrivant, le statut d'autochtone et les personnes ayant des besoins particuliers. La formule de financement initiale ne tenait délibérément pas compte des besoins des classes présentant une grande diversité. Favoriser l'inclusion devrait être la priorité de la nouvelle formule de financement.

### **Contrôle hiérarchique :**

En plus de s'attribuer le contrôle central du financement total mis à la disposition de chaque conseil scolaire de la province, le gouvernement de Mike Harris avait imposé une série de restrictions sur la manière dont ces fonds pouvaient être dépensés; il avait accentué les liens de responsabilité financière entre les directions de l'éducation des conseils scolaires et le Ministère provincial et exigeait que les conseils scolaires soumettent un relevé annuel comptable

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ery five years to ensure the formula is working as it should. But before any of this can happen, we must identify the guiding questions and the relationship between visionary planning and adequate funding.

It's time to articulate a new set of principles and guiding questions that lay out a unifying vision for elementary and secondary schools, and inform how we collectively view the success or failure of a school system in Ontario—one that starts by asking: what does a school need in order to fulfill its function?

**1.** Inclusive schools mean inclusive funding: A school needs to ensure that all students, regardless of their background or parents' income level, can get access to the best educational supports they need to succeed. The current approach to education funding amounts to one-size-fits-all, and that's not working.

**2.** Schools are community anchors, treat them that way: A school needs to play an anchor role in the community. Whether a school is situated in a series of neighbourhoods in large cities or in remote and Northern communities, provincial funding needs to reflect the central role that schools play in bringing people together, in promoting inclusivity, and in contributing to vibrant communities. Starving community anchors of adequate funding has resulted in schools in disrepair and unhealthy learning conditions.

**3.** Valuing the educators and education workers in our schools: A school needs highly skilled teachers, early childhood educators, and educational support workers who are treated as the partners that they are in the success of Ontario's education system. That means fostering a collaborative relationship with educators and education workers; one that recognizes their expertise and ensures they are recognized for and supported in the work they do. That includes a col-

laborative approach to system redesign and funding formula changes. Education workers are on the front lines of the classroom every single day. We count on them to deliver the best educational experience possible for students and they are our eyes and ears on the ground.

This is about fixing the underlying flawed principles of the formula so that kids' needs are met, educators and education workers are recognized as professionals and supported in and out of the classroom, and schools are treated and funded as the community hubs they are, often providing a range of services that enhance and extend beyond the school day. It's about ensuring that the public is provided with formal mechanisms to contribute to, engage with, and understand how policy is developed at the provincial level, and to ensure that kids are receiving the programming, care and resources that they are entitled to—because accountability is about much more than dollars or the false proxy of standardized tests.

But what does a rethink mean in real terms, and how does it address the largest flaws in the formula as identified previously in this article? In other words, what priorities need to underpin the development of a funding formula that works for kids, schools and communities today?

### Principles to inform a new funding formula

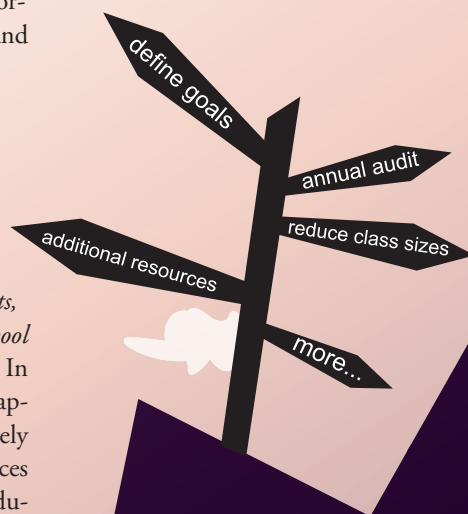
**1.** *Rather than establishing abstract and arbitrary funding amounts from the top down based on head counts, why not start at the centre, at the school level, and build the system from there?* In addition to providing a more holistic approach to funding that is more closely related to and driven by the resources students need, and the facilities and education workers needed to provide them, it would also provide a focal point for needs-responsive services like breakfast and lunch programs, after-school programming, and English as a Second Language programming. It would provide a basis for varying class sizes and

the provision of classroom and school support workers based on the needs of the students in the school. And it opens up important broader questions such as the role of the school in the community, and the relationships linking school size, educational effectiveness, and student commute times.

**2.** *Rather than a headcount-based formula, the province should be providing funding support based on the actual needs of students, teachers, and educational support workers.* This would ensure that programming for students with special needs, ESL and FSL students, and First Nations students would be linked directly to those needs.

**3.** *Set funded targets and minimum standards to maintain school buildings in good repair.* Commercial property managers are able to define what they mean by various standards of maintenance and how much it costs to achieve those standards. If that can be done for an office building or a shopping mall, why can't it be done for a school, particularly in the context of a nearly \$16 billion deferred maintenance deficit?

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extrêmement détaillé des sources et de l'utilisation de ce financement. Le refus catégorique de reconnaître le rôle des écoles en tant que carrefours communautaires et une méthode systématique de contrôle hiérarchique de l'utilisation des écoles ont engendré des vagues de fermetures d'écoles dans toute la province et a entravé la planification de nouveaux aménagements dans des zones subissant des changements d'ordre démographique. Le financement de base inadéquat continue de contribuer à des décisions de fermeture d'écoles.

### Un financement égal plutôt que de corriger les iniquités :

L'accent ayant été mis sur l'égalité du financement plutôt que l'équité de celui-ci représentait l'un des traits de la mesure introduite par le gouvernement de Mike Harris en 1997. Un financement égal semble juste puisque chaque élève reçoit le même soutien, chaque école obtient le même financement en fonction du nombre d'élèves qui la fréquentent. Le problème d'un financement égal est qu'il sous-entend implicitement que les besoins et les coûts sous-jacents sont équivalents, lorsqu'ils ne le sont pas du tout. Les exigences auxquelles font face les écoles de la grande ville de Toronto seront radicalement différentes de celles d'une école rurale qui joue le rôle de carrefour communautaire et qui, en même temps, lutte pour rester ouverte. L'obstination du gouvernement de Mike Harris sur l'égalité comme base du financement demeure au fond inchangée. Le temps est venu de résoudre les iniquités du système.

Il est indéniable que nous devons réviser la formule de financement de l'éducation en Ontario dans le but de déterminer la manière de la reconcevoir afin qu'elle apporte le financement adéquat à nos écoles. En outre, nous devons prendre l'engagement de la réviser tous les cinq ans afin de garantir que la formule remplit sa fonction comme il se doit. Mais avant que quoi que ce soit ne se produise, nous devons définir les questions d'orientation et le lien entre une planification visionnaire et un financement adéquat.

Le temps est venu d'exprimer clairement une nouvelle série de

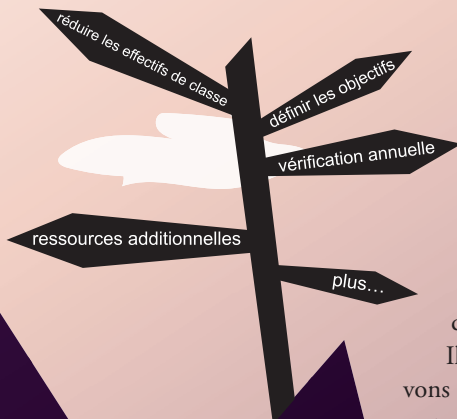
principes et de questions d'orientation qui établissent une vision unificatrice pour les écoles élémentaires et secondaires et de tenir compte de la manière dont nous nous représentons collectivement la réussite ou l'échec du système scolaire en Ontario. Une vision qui débute en se posant la question, à savoir : « En vue de satisfaire son rôle, de quoi une école a-t-elle besoin? »

**1.** Pour que les écoles soient inclusives, il faut que le financement soit lui aussi inclusif : Une école doit veiller à ce que tous les élèves, quel que soit leur milieu ou le niveau de revenus de leurs parents, puissent accéder aux meilleurs soutiens pédagogiques dont ils ont besoin pour réussir. La méthode actuelle du financement de l'éducation étant identique pour tout le monde ne convient pas du tout.

**2.** Les écoles sont les lieux de ralliement de la communauté, traitez-les comme tels : Une école doit jouer le rôle de point d'ancrage de la communauté. Que celle-ci soit située dans un ensemble de quartiers de grandes villes ou dans une région éloignée ou dans le Nord de la province, le financement provincial doit refléter le rôle central que les écoles jouent à rassembler la population, à favoriser l'inclusion et à dynamiser les communautés. Priver ces piliers communautaires du financement adéquat s'est traduit par des écoles en mauvais état et qui offrent des conditions d'apprentissage insalubres.

**3.** Reconnaître le personnel enseignant et les travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation de nos écoles : Une école a besoin d'enseignantes et d'enseignants, d'éducatrices et d'éducateurs de la petite enfance et de membres du personnel de soutien en éducation hautement qualifiés, que l'on traite comme les partenaires qu'ils sont dans la réussite du système éducatif de l'Ontario. Ceci se reflète en entretenant une relation de

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**4.** *Set—and fund—minimum standards for commute times.* If this existed, particularly in rural and Northern communities, managing commute times might figure into decisions ranging from support for student participation in extracurricular activities to school closures and facility sharing.

**5.** *Accountability measures must involve the provincial government, go beyond finances, and include public awareness, oversight and regular reviews.* With limited exceptions where funding is earmarked for particular activities, school board accountability is strictly financial. There should be program accountability: ESL funding should actually be spent on ESL programming or support. There should be a requirement that school facilities or student transportation systems meet program standards. And there should be accountability on the part of the provincial government for the adequacy and allocation of the funding that it provides to support the education system in Ontario. The one public review in 2002 had recommended a review and comment period in advance of annual funding decisions and a full public review of the system on a five-year cycle.

## Conclusion

A generation of students has gone through the system from beginning to end since the last review of its financing and effectiveness. And throughout their elementary and secondary school experience, the system has continued to be plagued by the intended and unintended consequences of 1997's funding constraints.

Yes, this is about money. But it's about more than money. And it's also about a new starting point entirely—one that centres on kids, schools and communities rather than dollars. It's about an honest examination of the schools we need and our kids deserve, and then determining how to get there, rather than starting with a finite number of dollars and determining which needs we can af-

ford to meet, and which ones we leave to chance and individual privilege. And it's a recognition that the expertise and ex-

perience of our educators and education workers must be valued in curriculum, policy, and system design.

## A 10-point blueprint for a new funding formula:

1. Set out and clearly define the goals of Ontario's elementary and secondary education system to assess the adequacy of Ontario's funding for education and to ensure school funding better reflects the needs of students and their community.
2. Continue the process of reducing class sizes in both elementary and secondary schools on a system-wide basis.
3. Re-establish the link between funding for special education and identified student support needs, including professional and paraprofessional supports, and fund the identified needs.
4. Establish an objective for English as a Second Language fluency and provide funding sufficient to achieve that objective.
5. Increase funding for students at risk based on demographic characteristics and make school boards accountable for their use of the funding. Immediately initiate a comprehensive review of what is required to facilitate student success, which has been recommended repeatedly since the introduction of the funding formula.
6. Establish a goal of maintaining all Ontario's schools in a clearly-defined standard of excellence, requiring:
  - a. An increase in operating funding for school operations and maintenance to ensure that school boards have the necessary resources, considering local factors such as labour costs, climate, the age of buildings, and the role of the school in the community;
  - b. An increase in regular funding for school renewal from 2% to 4% of replacement value that is widely recognized as necessary to maintain a state of good repair;
  - c. A 10-year investment in the elimination of the \$15 billion (and growing) deferred maintenance backlog in the schools.
7. Suspend financially-based school closures pending the replacement of the current suite of specialized grants for small schools with a comprehensive small schools policy that takes into account:
  - a. The role of schools in communities in rural and northern Ontario and the role of schools as community hubs for the delivery of services for families across the province;
  - b. The critical size and additional resources (including teachers and all educational support workers) required to meet education system objectives in small schools;
  - c. The relationship between school location and student transportation in light of commute time standards.
8. Conduct and publish an annual audit of students' ability to access specialized programming such as library services, music, art, and physical education, commuting times etc.
9. Make publicly available all education funding and policy documents, including technical papers and memos for each school year, to ensure transparency and to inform future funding decisions and regulations. Any new provincial regulations should be available in draft form for public input through an annual legislative committee review.
10. Introduce legislation requiring a comprehensive, evidence-based review of the funding and performance of Ontario's elementary and secondary education system, every five years—beginning immediately.

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collaboration avec les éducateurs et les travailleurs en éducation; une approche qui reconnaît leur expertise et qui veille à ce qu'ils soient reconnus pour le travail qu'ils effectuent et qu'on leur offre le soutien dont ils ont besoin. Ceci sous-entend une approche collaborative quant à la refonte du système et aux changements de la formule de financement. Jour après jour, les travailleurs en éducation occupent une place de premier plan dans la salle de classe. Nous comptons sur eux pour offrir aux élèves la meilleure expérience possible en matière d'éducation et, sur le terrain, ils sont nos yeux et nos oreilles.

Il s'agit ici de redresser les principes faussés de la formule pour que les besoins des enfants soient satisfaits, pour que les éducateurs et les travailleurs en éducation soient reconnus comme des professionnels et qu'ils soient soutenus tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur de la salle de classe et que les écoles soient traitées et financées comme les carrefours communautaires qu'elles sont vraiment, offrant souvent une gamme de services qui bonifient la journée scolaire et qui s'étendent au-delà. Il s'agit de veiller à ce qu'on mette à la disposition du public les outils officiels afin de contribuer à, de participer à et de comprendre la manière dont les politiques sont élaborées à l'échelle de la province et de garantir que les enfants se voient offrir les programmes, les soins et les ressources qu'ils sont en droit d'attendre, parce que la responsabilité dépasse de loin l'argent ou l'indicateur erroné des tests normalisés.

Mais dans la réalité, comment se traduit une refonte et de quelle façon répond-elle aux failles les plus importantes de la formule, celles identifiées plus tôt dans cet article? Autrement dit, quelles priorités devront être sous-jacentes à l'élaboration d'une formule de financement qui est bénéfique aux élèves, aux écoles et aux communautés aujourd'hui?

## Principes pour guider une nouvelle formule de financement

**1.** *Plutôt que d'établir des montants de financement abstraits et arbitraires par le biais d'un contrôle hiérarchique en fonction des effectifs, pourquoi ne pas débiter par le centre, à l'échelle de l'école et bâtir le système à partir de là?* En plus d'offrir une démarche de financement plus globale, liée davantage aux ressources dont les élèves ont besoin et inspirée de celles-ci de même que des structures et des travailleurs en éducation nécessaires pour les assurer, ceci créerait également un point de convergence pour les services adaptés selon les besoins, comme les programmes de déjeuners et de dîners, ceux après l'école et d'anglais langue seconde. Elle servirait de base à des classes de tailles diverses et d'appui des travailleurs en salle de classe et en personnel de soutien d'après les besoins des élèves de l'école. Ceci ouvre la voie à des questions d'importance plus générale, comme le rôle que joue l'école dans la communauté et l'interconnexion entre la taille de l'école, l'efficacité pédagogique et la durée du trajet des élèves.

**2.** *Plutôt qu'une formule basée sur les effectifs, la province devrait fournir du soutien en fonction des besoins réels des élèves, du personnel enseignant et des travailleurs de soutien en éducation.* Ceci garantirait que les programmes destinés aux élèves ayant des besoins particuliers, aux élèves en ALS et en FLS et à ceux des Premières Nations seraient directement liés à ces besoins.

**3.** *Établir des objectifs de financement et des normes minimales pour le maintien en bon état des bâtiments scolaires.* Les gestionnaires en immobilier commercial sont aptes à définir ce qu'ils entendent par diverses normes d'entretien et combien cela coûte pour les atteindre. Si on peut le faire pour un immeuble de bureaux ou un centre commercial, pourquoi ne peut-on pas le faire pour une école, notamment dans le contexte d'un déficit de près de 16 milliards de dollars d'entretien différé?

**4.** *Établir et financer des normes minimales de durée de trajet.* Si ceci existait, en particulier pour les communautés rurales et du Nord, la gestion de la durée de trajet quotidien pourrait jouer un rôle dans les décisions à prendre, allant du soutien nécessaire pour faciliter la participation des élèves à des activités parascolaires, aux fermetures d'écoles et au partage des infrastructures.

**5.** *Les mesures liées à la redevabilité doivent englober le gouvernement provincial, aller au-delà des questions financières et doivent comprendre la sensibilisation du public, une surveillance et des examens réguliers.* À peu d'exceptions près où le financement est affecté à des activités bien précises, la redevabilité des conseils scolaires est strictement d'ordre financier. Il devrait y avoir une redevabilité en matière de programmes : le financement prévu pour l'ALS devrait vraiment être dépensé pour la programmation et les soutiens en ALS. On devrait exiger que les infrastructures ou les systèmes de transport scolaire respectent les normes du programme. Il devrait également y avoir une redevabilité de la part du gouvernement provincial concernant la suffisance et l'allocation du financement qu'il fournit pour soutenir le système éducatif en Ontario. L'unique rapport d'enquête publique qui remonte à 2002 avait recommandé qu'une révision ainsi qu'une période préalable pour apporter des commentaires aient lieu avant que les décisions annuelles soient prises sur le plan du financement et qu'il y ait un examen public complet du système tous les cinq ans.

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## Conclusion

Une génération d'élèves a fréquenté le système en effectuant un parcours scolaire complet depuis que le dernier examen de ses finances et de son efficacité a été effectué. Au cours de leur expérience scolaire, tant à l'élémentaire qu'au secondaire, le système n'a pas cessé d'être miné par les répercussions voulues et non voulues des contraintes de 1997 en matière de financement.

Oui, il s'agit bien d'argent. Mais c'est bien plus qu'une question d'argent. Il s'agit aussi d'un nouveau départ en tout point : un qui place les enfants, les écoles et les communautés au premier plan plutôt que l'argent. Il est question de procéder à un examen honnête des écoles dont nous avons besoin et que nos enfants méritent pour ensuite déterminer comment nous y arrivons, plutôt que de démarrer avec un montant limité de dollars et déterminer les besoins que nous pouvons nous permettre de satisfaire et ceux que nous laissons au hasard et aux privilèges individuels. C'est également une manière de reconnaître qu'il faut accorder à nos éducateurs et aux travailleurs en éducation, du fait de leur expertise et de leur expérience, la possibilité de contribuer à l'élaboration du système, des politiques et du curriculum.

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## Plan en dix points d'une nouvelle formule de financement

1. Proposer et définir clairement les objectifs du système d'éducation élémentaire et secondaire de l'Ontario afin d'évaluer la suffisance du financement de l'Ontario pour l'éducation et d'assurer que le financement des écoles reflète mieux les besoins des élèves et de leur communauté.
2. Poursuivre le processus de réduction des effectifs de classe, tant dans les écoles élémentaires, secondaires que dans l'ensemble du système.
3. Rétablir le lien entre le financement de l'éducation de l'enfance en difficulté et les besoins identifiés en matière de soutien des élèves, y compris les services professionnels et paraprofessionnels et financer les besoins identifiés.
4. Établir un objectif en ce qui concerne la maîtrise de l'anglais langue seconde et fournir un financement suffisant pour réaliser cet objectif.
5. Accroître le financement dédié aux enfants à risque d'après des caractéristiques démographiques et faire en sorte que les conseils scolaires soient redevables quant à leur utilisation de ces fonds. Engager immédiatement un examen complet de ce qui est requis pour faciliter la réussite des élèves, une considération qui avait été recommandée à plusieurs reprises dès l'introduction de la formule de financement.
6. Imposer l'objectif de maintenir toutes les écoles de l'Ontario, selon une norme d'excellence clairement définie, exigeant :
  - a. Une augmentation des fonds de fonctionnement dédiés aux opérations et à l'entretien des écoles afin d'assurer que les conseils scolaires ont les ressources nécessaires, et ce, tout en tenant compte de facteurs locaux comme les coûts de main-d'œuvre, le climat, l'âge des bâtiments et le rôle de l'école dans la communauté;
  - b. Une augmentation du financement régulier pour la rénovation des écoles qui est largement reconnue comme équivalant à entre deux et quatre pour cent du coût de remplacement pour un maintien en bon état;
  - c. Un investissement échelonné sur dix ans visant à éliminer le déficit de 15 milliards de dollars (qui continue d'augmenter) d'entretien différé des écoles.
7. Interrompre les fermetures d'écoles sur une base strictement financière dans l'attente du remplacement de la série de subventions spécialisées actuelles des petites écoles par une politique complète des écoles de petite taille et qui tient compte de ce qui suit :
  - a. Le rôle des écoles dans les communautés rurales et du Nord de l'Ontario et leur rôle de carrefours communautaires comme prestataires de services aux familles de toute la province;
  - b. La taille critique et les ressources additionnelles requises (y compris le nombre d'enseignants et de tous les travailleurs en soutien pédagogique) pour satisfaire aux objectifs du système éducatif dans les petites écoles;
  - c. Le lien entre l'emplacement de l'école et le transport des élèves en fonction de normes en matière de durée de trajet.
8. Mener une vérification annuelle sur la capacité des élèves à accéder à des programmes spécialisés comme les services de bibliothèque, de musique, d'arts et d'éducation physique et sur la durée de trajet quotidien, etc. et la publier.
9. Rendre publics tous les documents concernant le financement et les politiques en matière d'éducation, y compris les notes de service et les documents techniques de chaque année scolaire, pour veiller à la transparence et orienter les règlements et décisions futures de financement. Tout nouveau règlement provincial devrait d'abord être disponible sous forme d'ébauche pour que le public puisse y contribuer, et ce, par l'intermédiaire d'un examen annuel par un comité législatif.
10. Présenter un projet de loi exigeant qu'ait lieu un examen complet éclairé par des données probantes du financement et des résultats des écoles élémentaires et secondaires de l'Ontario sur une base quinquennale, débutant immédiatement.





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SCHOOL18





# THE ROADS WE DO TAKE

## SPOKEN WORD AND THE YRDSB

by Yvonne Kelly

A number of roads have converged to bring spoken word to the York Region District School Board (YRDSB). From the pioneering efforts of Markville Secondary School English Head Lara Bozabalian (District 16, York Region) to the YRDSB Regional Slam Poetry Competition with internationally acclaimed spoken word artist Dwayne Morgan, we find ourselves in an incredible place where educators in York Region have a variety of opportunities to engage students in the world of spoken word.



# ROAD #1



Our journey begins with Lara

Twelve years ago, after witnessing—and competing in—Toronto’s powerful spoken word community, Lara Bozabalian decided to host an afternoon of spoken word in her high school library.

“What began as a graduation party for my Writer’s Craft class erupted into a three-hour festival of student voices,” she explains. “Tears, relief, victory and passion were shared through the creative efforts of Grade 12 students, all cheered on by their peers and mentors.”

The power of that moment was captured by a student who proclaimed upon leaving, “I’ve never felt so heard before!”

And with that, the *Be Heard Festival* was born.

The following year, Lara extended an invitation to high schools across the YRDSB, and the response was enthu-

siastic. Since then thousands of students have come through the festival and been mentored by internationally celebrated poets.

Lara is unequivocal about the positive impact the event has had on students. “What I have witnessed, time and again, is the birth of unity—students who arrive from different backgrounds and energy levels, choose to stand, shout, snap, and cheer for their peers, because of the galvanizing force of poetry. I see them leave, every year, faces lit and eager for the next event, any chance to string their words into stories, and to share those stories with the world beyond themselves, because they are certain of the value of their stories, and their place in this incredible community.”



# ROAD #2



Our journey continues with Dwayne

The *Be Heard Festival* is still going strong, but events leading to another element of Spoken Word at YRDSB were already taking shape a few years before Lara hosted that first spoken word session in her school library.

Sometime in 1998, an email found its way into the inbox of Dwayne Morgan. It was about a poetry slam happening in Philadelphia. Dwayne, a spoken word artist who had been working to encourage and promote the endeavours of African Canadian and urban-influenced artists, wasn't yet familiar with the world of poetry slams.

"I had never heard of the term before, and I wasn't sure what it was," Dwayne says. "So I borrowed my mother's van, packed up a few friends, and took a road trip to find out. I was totally amazed by what I witnessed, and somehow, I even ended up in the event. I knew that Toronto needed something like this, so upon my return, I started Ontario's first poetry slam series."

For the unfamiliar, a poetry slam is a competition where poets are given three minutes on stage to share their original work, and are then assigned scores by five random judges selected from the audience. Slam originated in Chicago as a way to make poetry more accessible and engaging, and to get the audience more involved.

After winning the Canadian National Poetry Slam in 2013, Dwayne was determined to ensure that more young people had access to the art of spoken word, and he came up with the idea of a poetry slam league. He encountered several hurdles and setbacks in his ef-

forts to launch a league through the Toronto District School Board, but Cecil Roach, Superintendent of Education, Equity and Community Services at the YRDSB, decided to take a chance on the idea. A team was put together to coordinate the plan, and twenty-two schools signed up for the inaugural year.

"As this was new to most everyone, we provided PD for teachers on what spoken word was and how it worked," Dwayne explains. "The next step was to introduce the idea to the students, and figure out all of the logistics. The team worked tirelessly and in the end, we were completely blown away by the stories the kids shared. Teachers had found a new way to engage students who often found themselves on the margins. With what we witnessed that first year we knew that we were on to something."

Cecil Roach was similarly enthused. After the inaugural competition he proclaimed, "Last night's Poetry Slam finals were spectacularly successful, and an exemplary portrayal of what our students are capable of producing when given the opportunity to truly use their voices. The poems were of incredibly high quality and had the packed room seesawing between tears and laughter. It would be hard to find more engaged students than the ones who had their teachers, administrators, and parents sobbing."

Five years after Dwayne Morgan first hatched the idea, there are now 50 elementary and secondary schools participating in the YRDSB Poetry Slam League. Morgan has also established a new league with the Halton District School Board.

# ROAD #3



## Serendipity ensues

I had first experienced slam poetry in Toronto, and I was so impacted by the performances that I knew we needed to bring this to our students. Little did I know that some of the artists I had been watching perform had probably been mentored by Dwayne in the early days. For all I know, one of them might even have been Lara. And because I was attached to the Inclusive Schools and Community Services Department when Dwayne approached the YRDSB, I have been fortunate enough to work on this initiative with him from the beginning.

Spoken word is a form of storytelling, but it is so much more. The basis of all spoken word is the written story—what is being said, why is it being said, and by whom. Spoken word draws inspiration from hip hop and other forms of music, using rhythm to create melodies. Spoken word performances also draw on the traditions of theatre, and provide a wealth of opportunities to enrich the experience of students. Spoken word supports literacy. It enables us to achieve a greater degree of student engagement, and because the students are telling their own stories, it leads to a more culturally responsive pedagogy that promotes social justice, socio-emotional well-being, and positive mental health. It's an activity well suited for meeting the needs of *all* learners, particularly those who have been marginalized and silenced.

Katie Krever, a York Region elementary teacher, says that spoken word has evolved into "one of the most integral staples" of her literacy program. "My Grade 7 and 8 students have learned about imagery, figurative language, tone, voice and point of view. And while I can confidently 'check off' these components of the curriculum, I can say with greater pride, that the lessons grew far beyond this Ontario document."

"Good stories don't need to be found

online or in a textbook," says Katie. "We have classes full of students who are already authors."

Engagement, student voice, well-being and a sense of community are common themes that we hear when talking to staff and students about spoken word. Forming positive relationships with peers bolsters a student's confidence, sense of connectedness and overall well-being. We see the spoken word initiative as closely linked to our board's work to enhance student well-being by providing safe places for student expression, a sense of inclusion and community, and opportunities for students to discover their often hidden talents, voices and even their sense of who they are.

Sahar Hoveyda, a Grade 10 student at Bayview Hill Secondary, says, "In Grade 7/8 I was introduced to spoken word and I mean it when I say that it changed my life. Not only did it allow me to express myself, it guided me in finding myself."

Based on these experiences, we've embedded spoken word into the work of the YRDSB's Inclusive Schools and Community Services Department in an effort to provide greater opportunity for authentic student voice. Student voice can truly liberate students to be their authentic selves and share their truths. It is sometimes terrifying, often inspiring, and always powerful.

"As educators we encourage students to use their voice," says Lorraine Gho-brial (District 16, York Region), English Head at Vaughan Secondary School. "We tell them that their voice matters and that their perspective is valued. For the student who is inspired by this, who sees this as a call to action, it can be very empowering but it is not always easy to find a platform from which to speak. Spoken word has given students that platform. My experience watching students dedicate themselves to finding



their voice and having the courage to step up and share their truth has been one of the greatest thrills of my life.”

Spoken word has also proven to be an inspiration for social justice and change—many students perform pieces that challenge the status quo and push back against systemic forms of oppression. “For me, it was the first time YRDSB truly meaningfully engaged student voice by creating space for students to express themselves through spoken word,” says Jathusha Mahenthirarajan, who graduated from YRDSB in 2017.

Spoken word has engaged many of our students who were otherwise not engaged in school, as well as those who had not previously expressed an interest in writing or performing. For some, the experience of “being the other”—feeling marginalized by their social identity—kept them silent. As Jathusha explains, “For myself, and many marginalized students, it gave us the stage to voice our concerns and talk about our lived experiences like never before. And for the first time, I felt heard as a South Asian Tamil Woman.”

Spoken word has given students who are struggling with their own challenges—mental health, social identity, oppression etc. a unique opportunity to share their struggles with others, sometimes for the very first time. “From stories of triumph and victory to loss, tragedy, or identity,” says Katie Krever, “my students finally had a place to share and reflect upon words that needed to be heard.”

For many students, finding like-minded and accepting peers gave them a new community of friends—friendship and acceptance being critical pieces of healthy youth development. “My clos-

est friends were made from slam and one of my best memories was making it to finals the two years I competed with my team,” says Nora Alganabi, who also graduated from YRDSB in 2017. Students from different schools who met and got to know one another at the festival or the different levels of competition, formed new friendships and often performed together at other board and non-board events.

Our students have expressed that spoken word has really helped them identify a direction and shaped their future choices. As Nora says, “I think it’s important that every individual practice an art form—something that can widen the scope of your imagination, and challenge social norms.”

Daniel Bielak, another YRDSB graduate, says, “Poetry and creativity continue to influence me today, as I now desire to work in an innovation lab, consulting on human-centered problem-solving for large companies and organizations.”

The value of spoken word has not been lost on parents, either. Sylvia Loisli, the parent of a student at Westmount CI shares how spoken word had been a positive experience for both her and her daughter. “I have to thank my daughter, Esther, as her passion for writing spoken-word poetry made me remember what a great influence poetry can have on one’s thinking and feelings. She was introduced first to spoken word poetry in elementary school by her teacher who made her love this unique way of expressing her feelings. As a parent, I’m looking forward to future slam poetry competitions and listening to the powerful messages the students have to share.”

## Our roads converge

It took some time for our roads to converge and for spoken word to assume the important role it now plays at YRDSB. But those roads did converge, and new ones are now emerging. Next year we will introduce Leadership Training opportunities for Grade 10 and 11 students, preparing them with the skills to train and mentor younger students interested in spoken word.

What continues to stand out for many of us is the incredible community that has been created for everyone involved. Between the Slam Poetry League and the *Be Heard Festival*, students and educators in York Region now have multiple opportunities to engage in the world of spoken word. At the end of any festival or level of competition, students who come together as strangers leave with a strong bond, new friendships and mutual respect. And it all happens in a few short hours. It’s really hard to top that!

If you’ve been inspired by what you’ve read here and you want to learn more, you can contact Yvonne Kelly at [yvonne.kelly@yrdsb.ca](mailto:yvonne.kelly@yrdsb.ca) or Dwayne Morgan at [info@dwaynemorgan.ca](mailto:info@dwaynemorgan.ca) for more information.

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**Yvonne Kelly**, District 16, York Region, is the Community and Partnership Developer with the Inclusive Schools and Community Services Department at the York Region District School Board.



# Events

Conferences,  
PD opportunities and  
other items of interest

**September 21–23, 2018**

**Council of Outdoor Educators of  
Ontario (COEO) Conference 2017  
YMCA Camp Pine Crest  
Muskoka, ON**

This year's conference will be comprised of four separate conference streams: Crafting & Making: Handmade and hands-on solutions to everyday problems; Creating Community: Connecting people to the environment and each other; Leadership Development: Supporting the next generation of outdoor leaders in Ontario; and Nature Study: New approaches to help us rediscover our natural surroundings. The conference will also include many unconventional elements and surprises—it will be an opportunity to explore new ideas and perspectives, learn and share best practices and rejuvenate and refocus for the year ahead.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.coeo.org](http://www.coeo.org).

**October 11–12, 2018**

**Ontario Physical and Health  
Education Association (OPHEA)  
Conference 2018  
Alliston, ON**

Packed with invaluable experiences, the Ophea conference presents educators from across the field with essential information, teaching tools, and new insights on ways to support the healthy, active living of children and youth.

If you are an elementary or secondary teacher, school or school board administrator, public health professional or community leader interested in the health of children and youth, the Ophea conference is here to support your professional learning!

For more information, please visit:  
[www.conference.ophea.net](http://www.conference.ophea.net).

**October 19–21, 2018**

**First Nations, Métis and Inuit  
Education Association of Ontario  
(FNMIEAO)  
Elders' Gathering**

**Cedar Glen YMCA - Bolton, Ontario**  
FNMIEAO presents our 3rd biannual Elders' gathering, Learning on the land with Elders, Senators & Knowledge Holders.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.fnmieao.com/events](http://www.fnmieao.com/events).

**October 20, 2018**

**CODE in the 6ix: Building  
Community  
University of Toronto,  
Scarborough Campus**

CODE in the 6ix is an exciting one day drama and dance conference for artists and educators. Through keynote panel talks, workshops, performances, and networking, participants will explore the role the arts plays in developing teachers' and students' understanding of diversity, as well as the steps that still need to be taken as we move forward in our global community.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.code.on.ca/code-6ix](http://www.code.on.ca/code-6ix).

**November 4–6, 2018**

**Ontario School Counsellors'  
Association (OSCA)  
Conference 2018  
Delta Hotels Toronto Airport and  
Conference Centre  
Toronto, ON**

OSCA/ACOSO 2018 celebrates 54 years of leading the way in Guidance and Career Education in Ontario. In helping students to become *architects of their own lives* (*Creating Pathways to Success*, page 10), this year's conference is designed to explore the unique op-

portunities available to our students as we explore this year's theme, *Celebrating Authentic Journeys*.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.osca.ca/osca-2018.html](http://www.osca.ca/osca-2018.html).

**November 6–8, 2018**

**Educational Computing  
Organization of Ontario (ECOO)  
Conference 2018  
Scotiabank Convention Centre  
Niagara Falls, ON**

*Bring it, together* is Ontario's premier educational technology conference. The conference will be attended by Teachers, Principals, Computer Consultants, Superintendents, Directors of Education, CIOs, ICT Managers, ICT Technicians, Support staff and TeLO Technology Enabled Learning & Teaching Contacts & District eLearning Contacts.

To find out more, please visit:  
[www.bringittogether.ca](http://www.bringittogether.ca).

**November 8–10, 2018**

**Science Teachers' Association of  
Ontario (STAO) Conference 2018  
Delta Hotels Toronto Airport and  
Conference Centre  
Toronto, ON**

The theme for this year's conference is *Science for All: Engaging Our Future*. Conference sessions will align with the themes: Inclusive Learning Environments, Inquiry and Problem-Based Learning, STEAM and Technology, and Connecting and Collaborating with Others.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.stao.ca/cms/conference-home](http://www.stao.ca/cms/conference-home).

**November 9–10, 2018**

**Ontario Association for Geographic  
and Environmental Education  
(OAGEE)  
2018 Fall Conference  
Ridley College  
St. Catharines, ON**

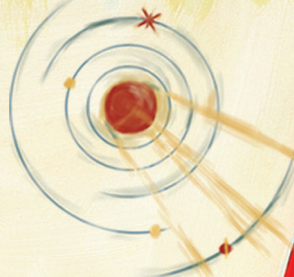
The themes for this year's conference are: The Language of Geography, Graphicacy & Geographic Thinking Concepts.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.oagee.org/en/90-fall-2018-conference-en-gb](http://www.oagee.org/en/90-fall-2018-conference-en-gb).



Learn more about the Student Achievement Awards and which of the categories you will enter at

[WWW.OSSTF.ON.CA/STUDENTACHIEVEMENTAWARDS](http://WWW.OSSTF.ON.CA/STUDENTACHIEVEMENTAWARDS)



NINE \$1000 PRIZES TO BE WON



IN 2019 THE ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION IS CELEBRATING ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY!

THE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS IN HONOUR OF MARION DRYSDALE

AHEAD

BY A CENTURY



Canadian women  
win right to vote  
**1918**

United Nations  
is formed  
**1945**

Native Canadians  
given the vote  
**1960**

Berlin Wall falls  
**1989**

Same sex marriage becomes  
legal in Canada  
**2005**

Malala Yousafzai becomes the  
world's youngest Nobel Peace  
Prize Laureate  
**2014**

Remember to plan to engage your students in the 2019 Student Achievement Awards. This year's theme, in honour of OSSTF/FEESO's 100th Anniversary is—Ahead by a Century. The full package, with application forms, tips, guidelines and student announcements that you can use in your school, will be available online in late August. Your school and District offices will receive the beautiful, full-colour poster and package in early September. Students can choose to write, paint, sculpt or even record an original song or video! This award program is a great way to recognize the unique relationship between OSSTF/FEESO staff members and their students as well as giving nine students the opportunity to win \$1000!





# Top picks

## Reviews

### Man on the Move: A Memoir

By Larry French

Tellwell Talent (February 5, 2018)

270 pages, Paperback \$27.95;

Kindle \$8.70; Kobo \$9.00

Reviewed by Wendy Anes

Hirschegger

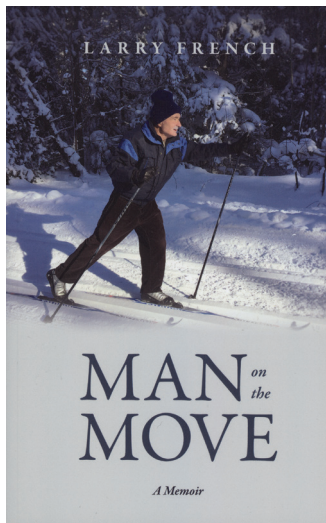
Long-time OSSTF/FEESO activists will know the name Larry French and may even know the man himself. Other members may simply recognize the name because it, along with Wendell Fulton's, graces one of the most prestigious provincial awards that can be bestowed upon a member: the Political Action Award—In Honour of Wendell Fulton and Larry French “is presented annually to a member who has shown outstanding leadership in political action either within the Federation or through work with political parties, other unions or labour councils.”

Larry's memoir, *Man on the Move*, tracks his life from his birth in Swastika in Northern Ontario, through his childhood/adolescence in Kirkland Lake, his post-secondary schooling at Queen's University and the Sorbonne in Paris, France, his teaching career (and brief stint as a Vice-Principal) mostly in Sault Ste. Marie, his exemplary work as a member of the OSSTF/FEESO secretariat from 1985 until his retirement in 1997, and finally his life since then, split between Canada and Switzerland. His writing is lyrical and intimate, his memory prodigious and there are references to poetry and films—two of his loves—in English and in French sprinkled throughout.

His tales of his schooling and his exploits as a student and as a teacher are interesting and often amusing, but it is the insight into some very dramatic years of OSSTF/FEESO history that is

the true fascination for the union junkie! And, as it is for all those who take up leadership positions in this union, the OSSTF/FEESO motto, “Let us not take thought for our separate interests but let us help one another,” was Larry's *modus operandi*.

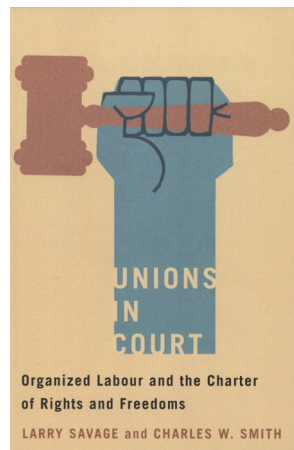
Reading those chapters of his memoir is like being a fly on the wall as he regales his “dear readers” with such tales as the first ever OSSTF/FEESO Election Desk in April 1985, where the key issue was extension of full funding to separate secondary schools. Future battles included the pension fight against the Peterson Liberals in the late 1980s, the fight against the Rae NDP's Social Contract in 1993, and finally the Days of Ac-



tion against the Harris Tories. As Larry explained to one MPP in 1987, “when OSSTF/FEESO took up arms it was usually in reaction to government initiatives that we perceived to be destructive to public education.”

That this continues to be true even today is, in essence, part of Larry's legacy to this union.

**Wendy Anes Hirschegger** retired from her role as an Executive Assistant at OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office in 2017. She was the editor of *Education Forum* from Fall 2007–Spring 2013.



### Unions in Court—Organized Labour and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms

By Larry Savage and Charles W. Smith

UBC Press (Oct. 1 2017)

280 pages, Paperback \$32.95;

Hardcover \$85.00; EPUB \$32.95

Reviewed by Bob Fisher

In *Unions in Court—Organized Labour and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Larry Savage and Charles W. Smith have provided a thorough account of Canadian unions and their evolution from their pre-charter tendency to avoid using the courts to their present-day, somewhat sophisticated, Charter-based legal strategy.

Savage and Smith begin by examining unions in the pre-charter era. During much of that time, the courts were distinctly pro-employer, and were avoided by unions. Following the seminal decision that created the “Rand formula,” several other critical court decisions created a labour relations model that “legitimized workers’ collective rights in those workplaces where workers opted for unionization.” However, the courts continued to render decisions that were not supportive of workers’ rights.

When the Constitution and Charter of Rights were being developed in the early 1980s, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) did not involve itself in the consultation process for primarily political reasons. The CLC's perceived inability to reach a consensus on the proposed Charter of Rights even within its own leadership resulted in a “constitutional paralysis” that made Canadian labour appear to



be extremely disorganized when it came to constitutional issues.

The first volley of Charter decisions related to organized labour served to reaffirm labour's fears that the courts would continue to demonstrate an anti-union bias. This was also the era of the 1987 "labour trilogy," which is examined in considerable detail by Savage and Smith. However, although a slow shift was becoming evident, unions continued to feel that "a constitutional, rights-based approach to defending and enhancing workers' rights was naïve at best and dangerous at worst...."

During the 1990s and early 2000s, the political climate shifted toward Neoliberalism, which finally provided labour with the opportunity to experience some success in the courts. The CLC stepped forward to take a position on constitutional reform, and actively promoted social rights for workers. Back in court, several key successes led to an increasing willingness of unions to consider legal strategies when advocating for the rights of their members.

In 2007, the BC Health Services decision was met with excitement by the labour movement, as it further extended the rights related to the freedom of association, although perhaps not as far as they claimed. A number of other Charter decisions followed as the courts grappled with the limitations on labour's ability to address bargaining rights as human rights.

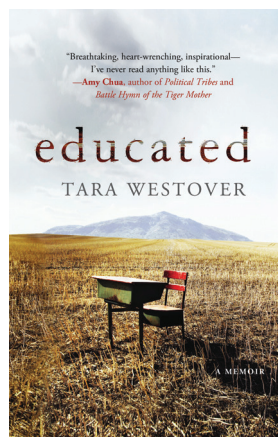
Finally, with the decision in Saskatchewan Federation of Labour v. Saskatchewan, the Supreme Court established the constitutional right to strike for union members. Savage and Smith provide an extensive examination of the broader implications of the decision. They posit that the effectiveness of using the Charter as a tool to advance workers' rights is unreliable and expensive at best, and subject to significant risk. In the end, they state that political activism and a "different type of labour politics" is necessary.

*Unions in Court—Organized Labour and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is written at a fairly high level, and is aimed at scholars with an interest in labour law and rights. It can be a hard read at times, but represents a very thorough and infor-

mative account of the Canadian labour movement's historical journey through the courts as they worked to establish constitutional labour rights.

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**Bob Fisher** is the Director of the Member Protection Department at Provincial Office.



**Educated**  
**By Tara Westover**  
**HarperCollins Publishers**  
**(Feb. 20 2018)**  
**352 pages, Paperback \$12.46;**  
**Hardcover \$31.49; Kindle \$9.99**  
**Reviewed by Tracey Germa**

The premise is simple—a girl from a survivalist Mormon family breaks free from her violent past, secretly educates herself sufficiently to gain entrance to Brigham Young University, and doesn't stop until she earns a PhD in History. But the story is anything but simple. *Educated* is more than mere memoir; it is a crystalized, distilled, realized validation of the power of knowledge and education. Westover's life story is riddled with moments where it would be understandable for a child to just give over, to accept the norm, and to succumb to the pressures of faith and family designed to keep her ignorant and disempowered. However, the author chooses again and again to find strength in her learning.

Tara Westover experienced a childhood full of the beauty of a rural, mountain-side life. Her parents believed in the land they lived on and took much from it—

her mother became a local midwife and now owns a highly successful natural medicines business in Idaho. Her father believes in conspiracies, the Illuminati, and the evils of government. Their less-than-mainstream approach to life included not registering Tara's birth and refusing Tara and her siblings access to public school. Homeschooling was non-existent for most of the Westover children, but Tara (and one of her older brothers) sought knowledge beyond the teaching of the church. This drive for more may have come from the siblings' need to always be alert; their time on the farm was punctuated with dangerous chores, multiple near-critical injuries, and a stream of violence that became a state of norm for the children.

Throughout the book, there are moments of unbelievable pain, danger, and frustration. Looking in on Westover's incredible story, it's easy to question her memory and to even think the tales are just too big to be true. The author deals with the issue of authenticity of memory by punctuating her memories with parallel or contradictory memories from other members of her family. She's worked to create a wide picture of her incredible experiences.

Rather than write from a place of anger and hate, Westover turns the memoir into a depiction of her own struggles with identity and self-worth. Thanks to ongoing support from the educators in her life, the author is able to take tentative steps toward understanding the world beyond her farm. She writes of her own plunge into depression and parallels her struggles with those of her bi-polar father. It becomes a picture of the transformative power of education, of how it can give us strength to find ourselves, of how it can help us escape even the most difficult situations. The memoir ends with a declaration of her ongoing love for her family, despite their treatment of her, but it further exalts her love of education.

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**Tracey Germa** is the 1st Vice-President of the Teachers Bargaining Unit in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge and is a member of the provincial Communications and Political Action Committee.

# OSSTF/FEESO and *researchED* Ontario

Insisting on evidence-based practice



It's ironic that a conference grounded in evidence-informed practice began with what seemed like confirmation of the age-old Friday-the-13th superstition. As with good pedagogy, though, careful planning and consideration of contingencies meant that we did not succumb to the ice storm that was brewing outside; the conference went ahead, and did so to an overwhelmingly positive response from the nearly 300 attendees.

With dozens of workshops, an international panel, and a keynote address by Dr. Daniel Willingham, professor, author, and perhaps the most authoritative voice on the use of cognitive science in the classroom, *researchED Ontario* provided educators with a full array of profoundly useful information on everything from early reading and math instruction to behaviour management to Dr. Willingham's cogent presentation of what educators need to know (and don't need to know) about cognitive science to inform their practice.

I am extremely proud of OSSTF/FEESO's decision, through approval of the 2017/18 Annual Action Plan, to support this conference, and equally proud of the fact that so many OSSTF/FEESO members, among a roster of internationally respected educators and researchers, volunteered to conduct workshops of their own. I am also proud

that so many educators—OSSTF/FEESO members and others—committed a Friday evening and Saturday to attend. This confirms what I have long held to be true—that there is a powerful appetite among our membership to perfect their professional practice within a collaborative atmosphere for the sake of the students in our charge. Educators also want to be supported in their ability to choose professional development that meets their needs and implement their learning in accordance with their professional judgment.

OSSTF/FEESO, by virtue of its statutory obligations and its own mission, will always place the advancement of members' interests at the forefront. Through collective bargaining and member protection, we will ensure educators are treated properly. It is comforting to me that this mission does not conflict but rather coincides with our union's declared purpose of protecting and enhancing public education. Decently remunerated education professionals who have a solid defence against arbitrary and unfair treatment do not detract from the attainment of educational goals, they contribute to it.

It is equally important to acknowledge that educating students is a deeply human pursuit. The infinite complexity of human interaction means that education will always be partly an art. Deciding what is needed in the case of a particular student or in the pursuit of a particular objective will never be determined by algorithm or flowchart. The combination of knowledge, experience and professional judgment is the key to sound, and indeed excellent, professional practice. All of which is to say that engaging with an organization like *researchED*, along with other initiatives approved at the OSSTF/FEESO Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA)

2018, is not in the least about imposing particular practices on our members. OSSTF/FEESO has neither the authority nor the will to do so. It is rather about responding to a need, often expressed by the membership, to be supported in the exercise of their professional judgment. In doing so, we contribute to our members' professional fulfilment and buttress our ability to affect education policy and negotiate on their behalf.

Be assured, this reclaiming of our professionalism will not go without opposition from certain quarters. In some cases, our employers will fear ceding decisions to those who actually work face to face with students. Others will misunderstand our goals, perhaps deliberately. And those who have a stake in promoting some new "Magical Ingredient X" that they claim is indispensable to effective education will fear loss of turf. But this should not dissuade us, when someone insists that a new strategy or technology or other innovation must be adopted, from asking the simple but powerful question, "What evidence do you have that this will work?" While it is likely the case that "nothing works everywhere and everything works somewhere," as Dylan Wiliam has said, there are better and worse bets for what is likely to be most effective. As long as time remains an educator's most valuable commodity, we can't afford to waste it on imposed initiatives that can't begin to address that question.

Over and over again, it has been reinforced for me that our members want to do the best they can for students in the various settings in which we work. For as long as they want us to do so, OSSTF/FEESO will continue to find ways to support them in exercising their professional judgment.

Harvey Bischof,  
OSSTF/FEESO President



# OSSTF/FEESO et *researchED* Ontario

Insister sur la pratique fondée sur des données probantes

C'est ironique qu'une conférence fondée sur des pratiques éclairées par des données probantes ait commencé par ce qui semble être une confirmation de la superstition lointaine du vendredi 13. Malgré tout, comme pour toute bonne pédagogie, une planification et une prise en considération minutieuses pour parer à toute éventualité ont fait que nous n'ayons pas eu à succomber à la tempête de pluie verglaçante qui se tramait à l'extérieur. La conférence a eu lieu quand même et a été extrêmement bien accueillie par près de 300 participants.

*ResearchED Ontario* a présenté aux éducatrices et aux éducateurs toute une panoplie de renseignements fort utiles sur des sujets aussi variés que la lecture précoce, l'enseignement des mathématiques, la gestion du comportement, jusqu'à la présentation convaincante du Dr Willingham, professeur et auteur, sur ce que les éducateurs doivent connaître (et n'ont pas à connaître) au sujet de la science cognitive afin de guider leurs pratiques.

Je suis extrêmement fier de la décision prise par OSSTF/FEESO, par le biais de l'approbation du Plan d'action annuel de 2017-2018, de soutenir cette conférence et tout aussi fier du fait que tant de membres d'OSSTF/FEESO, aux côtés d'un répertoire d'éducateurs et de chercheurs respectés à l'échelle internationale, se sont portés volontaires pour animer leur propre atelier. Je suis également fier que tant d'éducatrices et d'éducateurs, membres d'OSSTF/FEESO et autres, aient consacré un vendredi soir et tout un samedi pour y assister. Ceci confirme, ce que je tiens pour acquis depuis longtemps, qu'il y a une avidité au sein de nos membres à perfectionner l'exercice de leur profession au sein d'une atmosphère collaborative pour les élèves dont ils ont la responsabilité. Les éducateurs souhaitent également être appuyés dans leur capacité à choisir la perfection-

nement professionnel répondant à leurs besoins et à organiser leur apprentissage selon leur jugement professionnel.

OSSTF/FEESO, en vertu de ses obligations statutaires et de sa propre mission, placera toujours au premier plan l'avancement des intérêts de ses membres. Au moyen de la négociation collective et de la protection des membres, nous veillerons à ce que les éducateurs soient bien traités. Il m'est réconfortant de savoir que cette mission n'est pas contradictoire, mais coïncide plutôt avec le but de notre syndicat de protéger et de faire avancer l'éducation financée par les deniers publics. Le fait d'avoir des professionnels de l'éducation convenablement rémunérés, qui disposent d'une défense solide contre les traitements arbitraires et injustes, n'empêche pas d'atteindre les objectifs fixés en matière d'éducation; il y contribue.

Il est tout aussi important de reconnaître que d'instruire les élèves est une activité profondément humaine. La complexité infinie des interactions humaines signifie que l'éducation sera toujours en partie un art. Prendre la décision de ce qui est nécessaire dans le cas d'un élève en particulier ou dans la poursuite d'un objectif précis ne pourra jamais être déterminé par un algorithme ou un programme. L'amalgame de connaissances, d'expérience et de jugement professionnel est la clé d'un exercice professionnel sûr et excellent. Tout cela pour dire que créer un partenariat avec un organisme tel que *researchED*, avec d'autres initiatives approuvées à la Réunion annuelle de l'Assemblée provinciale (RAAP) 2018 d'OSSTF/FEESO, ne consiste pas du tout à imposer des pratiques précises à nos membres. OSSTF/FEESO n'a ni l'autorité ni la volonté de le faire. Il s'agit plutôt de répondre à un besoin, souvent exprimé par les membres eux-mêmes, d'être appuyés dans l'exercice de leur jugement professionnel. En le faisant, nous

contribuons à l'épanouissement professionnel de nos membres et renforçons notre capacité à avoir une incidence sur les politiques en éducation et à négocier en leur nom.

Soyez assurés que cette reconquête de notre professionnalisme ne se produira pas sans opposition de la part de certains groupes. Dans certains cas, nos employeurs craindront de céder la prise de décisions à celles et à ceux qui travaillent véritablement avec les élèves. D'autres se méprendront sur nos intentions, peut-être délibérément. Et ceux qui ont un intérêt à promouvoir toute nouvelle «Formule magique X» qu'ils prétendent être indispensables pour une éducation efficace craindront de perdre ce secteur. Mais ceci ne devrait en aucun cas nous dissuader, car lorsque quelqu'un insiste pour que nous adoptions une nouvelle stratégie, technologie ou autre innovation, il suffit de leur poser la question toute simple, mais pertinente : «Quelle preuve avez-vous que ceci fonctionnera?» Bien qu'il soit probable, que comme Dylan Wiliam l'a dit : «rien ne fonctionne partout et que tout fonctionne quelque part», il y a des paris qui sont à soutenir plus que d'autres pour en venir à trouver la solution la plus efficace. Tant que le temps demeure la matière première la plus précieuse d'un éducateur, nous ne pouvons pas nous permettre de le gaspiller à des initiatives qui ont été décrétées et qui n'ont même pas la moindre chance de répondre à cette question.

Maintes et maintes fois, on m'a confirmé que nos membres souhaitent servir au mieux les élèves, quel que soit le milieu dans lequel ils travaillent. Tant qu'ils souhaiteront que nous le fassions, OSSTF/FEESO continuera de trouver des moyens de les soutenir dans l'exercice de leur jugement professionnel.

Harvey Bischof,  
président d'OSSTF/FEESO

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