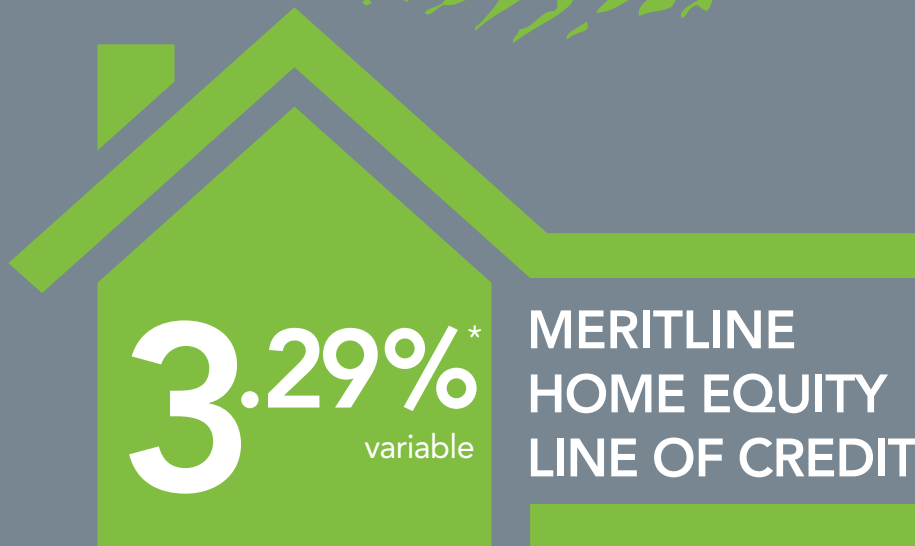


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Taking on the challenge

A new perspective brings us together



It is with humility and excitement that I take on the role of editor of *Education Forum*. For me, the publication has always signalled some of the best of what the Federation has to offer. *Education Forum* facilitates a deep and broad analysis about education, labour, and what it means to be part of civil society.

Right now it may feel as if the world has become disturbingly unhinged, but we have to try and find the moments of light in the darkness. We are experiencing a wholesale challenge to many of our norms and structures. We are at a point where we have the opportunity to make meaningful, progressive changes. But we are also at a point where our isolation and division threaten to break us apart. I'm choosing to embrace these challenges and changes while firmly holding on to my sanity by reaching out for the little things that matter.

I'm trying take a moment here and there to remind myself that we are, as a whole world, facing this pandemic together. Our individual lived experiences are very different and they must all be recognized for their power while we also recognize our need for one another.

Our organization, like so many others, is in the process of self-reflection. The recognition of the depth of systemic and normalized racism, the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on some of our most vulnerable communities, and the advent of a new learning experience in Ontario's publicly-funded schools are all part of what has made up the year. Add to this the fact that we conducted one of the most contentious and publicly-fought rounds of negotiations in Ontario's education history, and we can all say that we are living in difficult and challenging times. But we are embracing the challenge.

I keep hearing the word "pivot" used in reference to our changing views on

the world. The idea of having to grasp ideas that are different than we have embraced previously is exactly the goal of education. We work in a field where we ask students to pivot all the time. Our Provincial Executive has jointly authored the cover story *OSSTF/FEESO—Racism, Oppression, Equity* for this issue and I think it best highlights the value of the pivot. It is about facing up to what we think we know, what we thought was best, and reorienting ourselves to improve. Jennifer Seif and Nanci Henderson, in their article *Exploring the white fragility narrative* put the pivot to the test as they embark on a critical friendship exploring and challenging race and privilege. OSSTF/FEESO's Policy Analyst, Chris Samuel uses the idea of the pivot in his evaluation of truth, facts, "fake news," and public perception. Beyhan Farhadi considers the discrepancies of online learning experiences. Pieces in this edition reflect concepts of moving, pivoting, questioning, and reorienting.

But one of the greatest pivots to date for our organization was our approach to bargaining this past year. In *Transparent bargaining—Using transparency and facts to counter Ford's dishonest narrative* the organization reflects on its decision to engage in transparent bargaining; the approach arguably changed the course of bargaining in education as it engaged a whole new level of public awareness of education.

I invite you to tuck into this extended issue of *Education Forum* with a mind open to new ideas, and I invite you to embrace the opportunities for the best pivots that will bring out the best in us all. And above all else, I wish you wellness as we face the future.

In solidarity,

Tracey Germa, Editor
tracey.germa@osstf.ca

Relevez le défi

Une nouvelle perspective nous rassemble

C'est avec humilité et enthousiasme que j'entreprends le rôle de rédactrice en chef d'*Education Forum*. Pour moi, cette publication a toujours mis de l'avant les meilleurs atouts de la Fédération. *Education Forum* facilite une analyse profonde et vaste de l'éducation, du mouvement syndical et de ce que cela signifie de faire partie d'une société civile.

Au moment présent, on pourrait s'imaginer que le monde est dangereusement sorti de ses gonds, mais il faut essayer de trouver des moments de lumière dans cette obscurité. Nous vivons un défi monumental qui vient ébranler nos normes et structures. Nous en sommes à un point tel que l'occasion s'offre à nous d'apporter des changements pertinents et progressifs. Cependant, nous en sommes également au point où notre isolement et notre division peuvent présager une division. Je choisis d'accepter ces défis et ces changements tout en m'agrippant à ma santé mentale en me tournant vers les petites choses qui ont de l'importance.

Je tente de prendre un moment ici et là pour me rappeler que nous faisons face à cette pandémie ensemble, à l'échelle mondiale. Nos expériences vécues individuelles sont très différentes les unes des autres et doivent toutes être reconnues pour leur force alors que nous reconnaissons également notre besoin réciproque les uns pour les autres.

Notre organisme, comme tant d'autres, entreprend présentement une autoréflexion. La reconnaissance de la profondeur d'un racisme systémique et normalisé, l'impact disproportionné de la pandémie de la COVID-19 sur certaines de nos communautés les plus vulnérables et le début d'une nouvelle expérience d'apprentissage dans les écoles financées à même les deniers publics en Ontario font tous partie de ce qui a mar-

qué la présente année. Ajoutons à ceci le fait que nous avons mené une des rondes de négociation débattues publiquement et plus litigieuses de l'histoire de l'éducation en Ontario. Nous pouvons tous attester au fait que nous vivons une période des plus difficiles. Cependant, nous acceptons d'emblée ce défi.

J'entends souvent le mot « pivot » pour décrire l'évolution de nos points de vue sur le monde. L'idée de devoir saisir des concepts qui diffèrent de ce que nous acceptions auparavant, voilà exactement le but de l'éducation. Nous travaillons dans un domaine où nous demandons aux élèves de pivoter incessamment. Notre Exécutif provincial a rédigé conjointement l'article-vedette *OSSTF/FEESO—Le racisme, l'oppression, l'égalité* pour le présent numéro et je crois qu'il souligne le mieux la valeur de ce pivot. Il s'agit de faire face à ce que nous croyons savoir et ce qui était, selon nous, la meilleure marche à suivre et de nous réorienter dans le but de nous améliorer. Jennifer Seif et Nanci Henderson, dans leur article *Exploring the white fragility narrative*, mettent à l'épreuve le pivot alors qu'elles entreprennent une amitié critique pour explorer et mettre en question la race et le privilège. L'analyste des politiques d'OSSTF/FEESO, Chris Samuel, utilise l'idée du pivot dans son évaluation de la vérité, des faits, des fausses nouvelles (*fake news*) et la perception du public. Beyhan Farhadi examine les écarts dans les expériences de l'apprentissage en ligne. Les articles du présent numéro se penchent sur les concepts du changement, du pivot, de la mise en question et de la réorientation.

Cependant, un des meilleurs pivots à ce jour pour notre organisme a été l'approche à la négociation au cours de la dernière année. Dans l'article *Transparent bargaining—Using transparency and facts to counter Ford's dishonest narrative*,

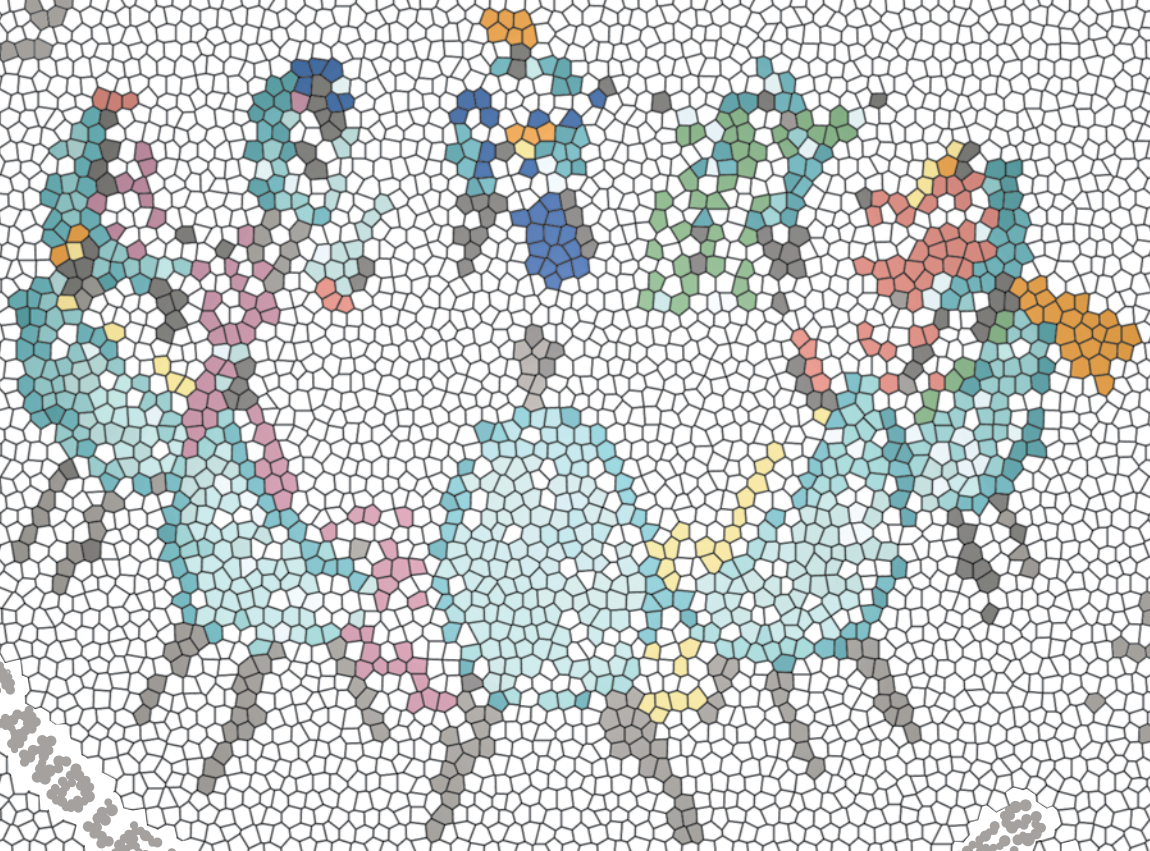
notre organisme se penche sur sa décision de s'engager dans une négociation transparente; cette approche a sans doute changé le cours de la négociation dans le domaine de l'éducation, alors qu'elle a entraîné une sensibilisation du public à l'éducation jamais vue auparavant.

Je vous invite à savourer ce numéro prolongé d'*Education Forum* en gardant l'esprit ouvert à de nouvelles idées. Je vous invite également à saisir les occasions de meilleurs pivots qui iront chercher le meilleur de nous tous. Et par-dessus tout, je vous souhaite le bien-être alors que faisons face à l'avenir.

En toute solidarité,

Tracey Germa, rédactrice en chef
tracey.germa@osstf.ca

Overlook Books



TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CHALLENGING TIMES
BY PAMELA BUTTARY

After getting into a physical fight in the convenience store near their high school, Liam and Trevor experienced significant consequences—a trip to the emergency room for a broken arm, dual suspensions from school, and police involvement. So why, only two weeks later, were they on the brink of another altercation? That question and the realization that short of expulsion, Ms. Johnston's repertoire of discipline strategies had been depleted, is what prompted her call to me. As a restorative practitioner, trained in circle and conferencing processes, the principal asked me to facilitate a community circle with the boys and their parents in an effort to alleviate the ongoing tension and hostility. There were many meaningful discussions in the circle that followed, but the defining moment was when the father of the boy with the broken arm had his turn to speak. He spoke directly to the boy who had physically injured his son and said we are new to the area, we just moved in from the city and we thought this would be a safer place for our family. We hold no grudges against you for this incident, as we know our son was also at fault. We would really appreciate it if we could put this behind us, and that both of you would make better choices in the future. Both sets of parents agreed and reminded their sons of their future goals and how an incident like this and a possible criminal record may be barriers to their future success. Not only did this one-hour conference help the boys work through their disagreement and move forward peacefully, but it also positively impacted the overall health and well-being of the school community, creating a safer and more harmonious environment for all the students, and freeing the principal up to focus on other school needs and issues.

What are the benefits of using restorative practices in your educational setting? What value does this approach offer for building and maintaining healthy relationships and repairing harm when conflict arises? How could you

use the restorative practice framework to address the challenges that COVID-19 has forced us to contend with, while attempting to find some sort of normalcy in our daily lives?

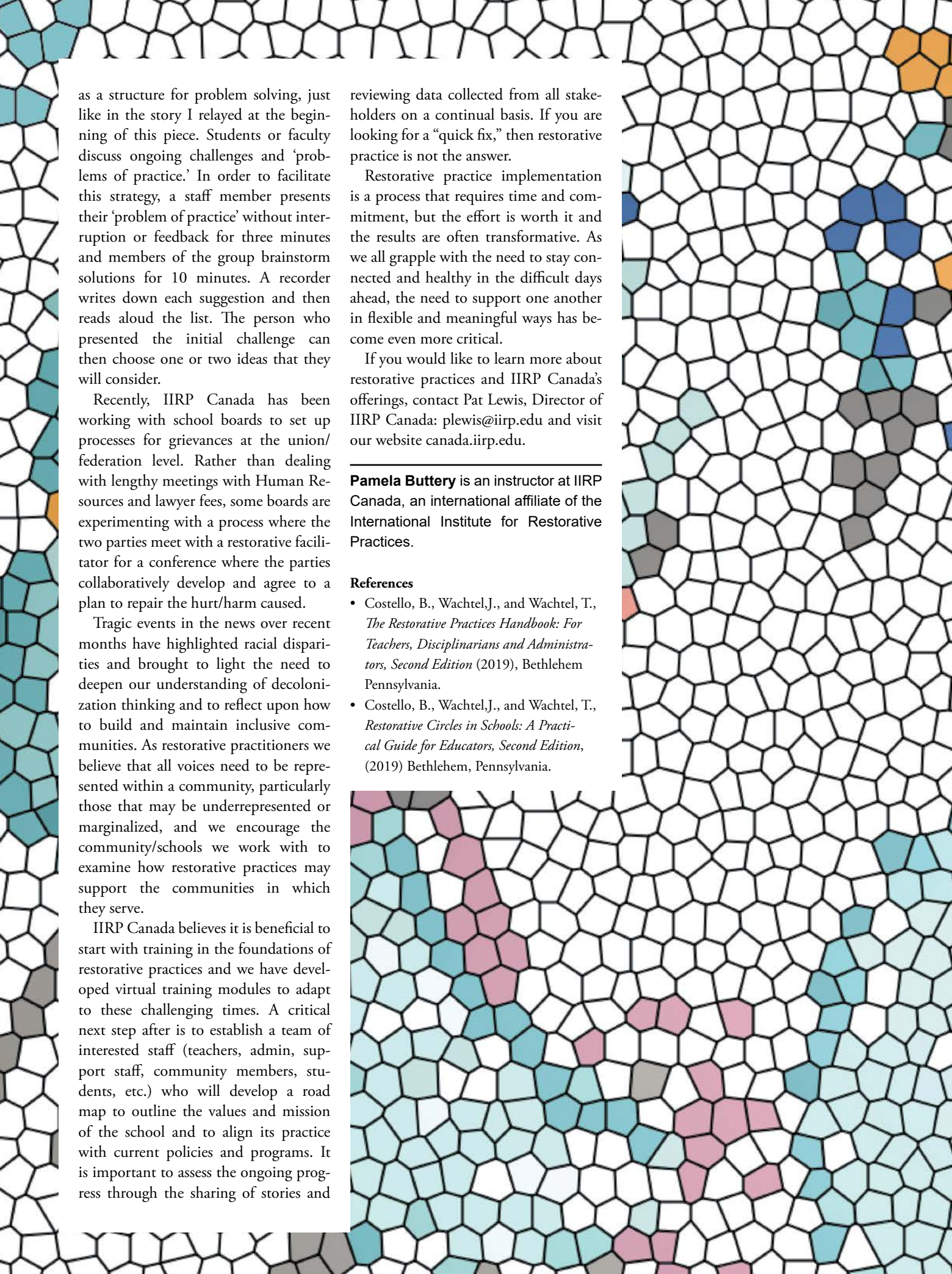
Pat Lewis, Director of International Institute of Restorative Practices-Canada, says "the pandemic has highlighted our need as social beings to be connected to each other and restorative practice nurtures this sense of belonging and community." Although she acknowledges that in these times of social distancing it may be more difficult to use the circle structures that are often used in classroom settings, it is not the time to abandon efforts to build a sense of community. Pat suggests that practitioners be creative in coming up with other ways to uphold the principles of restorative practices while social distancing, emphasizing the importance of students connecting with one another and having opportunities to share their experiences and stories. We can start to do this by using "affective language" and having small impromptu conversations in our classrooms, hallways, and staffrooms.

Throughout my lengthy career in education, as a high school teacher and administrator, I witnessed firsthand the importance of putting relationships first and the benefits of using the classroom circle structure (which originated from Indigenous traditions) to build positive classroom communities, and the transformative nature of restorative conferencing (developed in New Zealand and Australia as victim/offender meetings).

"Teachers have many different means and techniques for delivering course content including lectures, small group activities, discussions, tests and quizzes, videos, projects and games. We encourage teachers to think of the circle

as adding another string to a teacher's bow, a versatile technique capable of serving multiple functions." (*Restorative Circles in Schools*, Wachtel p. 41) Circles are extremely versatile, they can be used for classroom discussions to facilitate positive interchange among students of any age or to introduce a new topic, set classroom norms/guidelines, to plan a project, or as an assessment tool to measure students comprehension of material, or to gain a sense of the prior knowledge students may already have in a subject area. Circle structures offer teachers creativity and flexibility. One such example came up during a recent virtual training session, where a high school teacher shared their practice of having a different circle ritual for each day of the week. On "Moody Monday" students reflected on highlights and lowlights from their weekend, on "Throwback Thursday" they focused on past academic goals, and on "Freestyle Friday" the students got to choose the circle topic. Further, circles are an incredibly flexible tool for teachers to have in their toolkit, they can be inside or outside, in small spaces or large, or designed for different learning types, such as kinesthetic learners. Even staff meetings can be opportunities for community building using standing circles!

Outside of their potential for enhancing engagement, a circle can also be used



as a structure for problem solving, just like in the story I relayed at the beginning of this piece. Students or faculty discuss ongoing challenges and ‘problems of practice.’ In order to facilitate this strategy, a staff member presents their ‘problem of practice’ without interruption or feedback for three minutes and members of the group brainstorm solutions for 10 minutes. A recorder writes down each suggestion and then reads aloud the list. The person who presented the initial challenge can then choose one or two ideas that they will consider.

Recently, IIRP Canada has been working with school boards to set up processes for grievances at the union/federation level. Rather than dealing with lengthy meetings with Human Resources and lawyer fees, some boards are experimenting with a process where the two parties meet with a restorative facilitator for a conference where the parties collaboratively develop and agree to a plan to repair the hurt/harm caused.

Tragic events in the news over recent months have highlighted racial disparities and brought to light the need to deepen our understanding of decolonization thinking and to reflect upon how to build and maintain inclusive communities. As restorative practitioners we believe that all voices need to be represented within a community, particularly those that may be underrepresented or marginalized, and we encourage the community/schools we work with to examine how restorative practices may support the communities in which they serve.

IIRP Canada believes it is beneficial to start with training in the foundations of restorative practices and we have developed virtual training modules to adapt to these challenging times. A critical next step after is to establish a team of interested staff (teachers, admin, support staff, community members, students, etc.) who will develop a road map to outline the values and mission of the school and to align its practice with current policies and programs. It is important to assess the ongoing progress through the sharing of stories and

reviewing data collected from all stakeholders on a continual basis. If you are looking for a “quick fix,” then restorative practice is not the answer.

Restorative practice implementation is a process that requires time and commitment, but the effort is worth it and the results are often transformative. As we all grapple with the need to stay connected and healthy in the difficult days ahead, the need to support one another in flexible and meaningful ways has become even more critical.

If you would like to learn more about restorative practices and IIRP Canada’s offerings, contact Pat Lewis, Director of IIRP Canada: plewis@iirp.edu and visit our website canada.iirp.edu.

Pamela Buttery is an instructor at IIRP Canada, an international affiliate of the International Institute for Restorative Practices.

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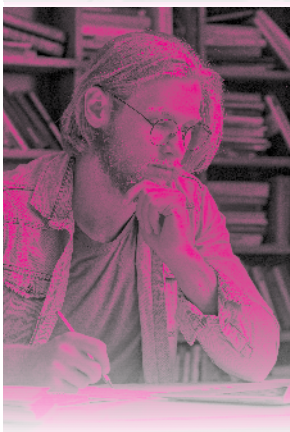
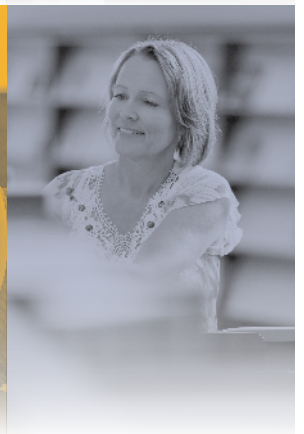
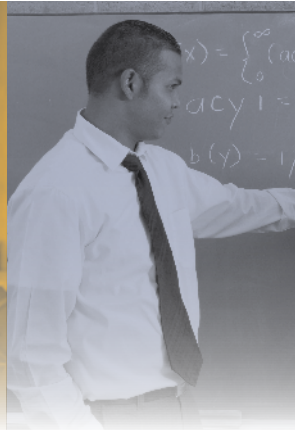
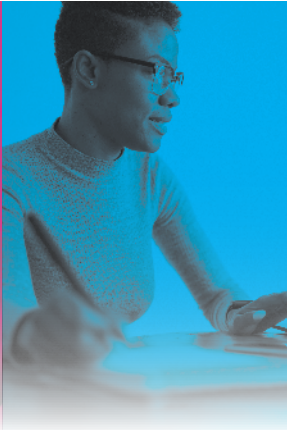
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EXPLORING THE *White* *Fragility* NARRATIVE

by: Nanci Henderson
and Jennifer Seif

Editor's Note:

This feature is a reflective piece between two OSSTF/FEESO, Generation X women. One, Jennifer Seif, identifies as Black; the other, Nanci Henderson, identifies as white. Both were incredibly disturbed by what happened on May 25 to George Floyd and by the continued assaults on Black bodies elsewhere, including in Canada. Separately they were reeling from these ongoing events when they both attended the Remote Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (Remote AMPA) in June 2020 where for the second year in a row, members called out systemic racism in OSSTF/FEESO. Curiously, both women also planned to read Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism* over the summer. Jennifer and Nanci met as members of the provincial Communications & Political Action Committee of OSSTF/FEESO in the 2019–2020 Federation year. At the time, Nanci held the position of Chair of the committee and Jennifer was a brand new member to the group. However, both Jennifer and Nanci came to their meeting of the minds with years of political action behind them. Both women brought to this discussion experiences gained in various local leadership roles with the Federation. The authors of this reflection undertook a series of conversations from June to September 2020 as they unpacked the ideas contained in *White Fragility*. What became more important than their reflections on DiAngelo's writing was their cross-racial dialogue centred on sharing, listening, questioning, and deconstructing their individual understandings of race, as well as their own lived experiences as individuals within racial groups.

OUR RECKONING

***“Taking responsibility
for our actions is much
harder than finding
someone or something
to blame.”***

(UNKNOWN)

When on May 25, 2020 George Floyd's neck compressed under the cumulative weight of centuries of systemic racism, most of humanity felt the instinctive reflex to disavow the racist violence seen glaring through our COVID-isolated screens. Together we felt sick to our stomachs, as we listened to pundits, advocates, journalists, protestors, and educators explain exactly what cracked under the weight of Constable Derek Chauvin's knee. On the surface George Floyd was dead. Days and nights of protests, violence, and looting followed the horizontal lynching of a Black man by Minneapolis police. Many people likened this emotional unrest to the early 1990s when Rodney King's beating was televised, along with the acquittal of the police who brutally attacked him. For some, Floyd was yet another Black man, friend, neighbour, brother, son, father, husband dead at the hands of police. For others, while they understood that what happened to Floyd was terrible, they wanted to change the subject to the wrongs of violent looting instead of the decades of dead men slain by police. After all, we were all living through a global pandemic where we were supposed to be at home social distancing. To be clear, everyone is at a different point in their understanding of racism, especially in Canada where we make sport out of self-righteously comparing our piety to Americans. However, it's 2020 and this article sets out to suggest some ways to “raise the bar and close the gap” for education workers. We need to have a reckoning with our flawed and incomplete understanding of our Canadian brand of racism, and it must be tied to our colonial, settler roots. The reckoning is nigh. It is time for whites to self-educate because ignorance is no longer acceptable and plausible deniability has no space in public education that espouses inclusion for all.

WHY IS CROSS-RACIAL DIALOGUE *difficult*?

Nanci: My personal world has been, and continues to be, blindingly white. When I picked up *White Fragility* I was VERY open to the concepts, but I wanted someone to dialogue with. It was a risk to approach Jennifer because I didn't want to place her in the role of "educator" and put that labour on her. I decided to risk a misunderstanding in order to uncover the potential for growth and healing. These conversations revealed to me how ignorant I was, which was startling. As I answered the questions that DiAngelo raised, I started to understand that as a white woman with limited interactions with people of colour, I had to work hard to understand what it is like to live with an imposed group, racial identity. Whites fight this by using all the other intersecting "isms." I was unconsciously adept at changing the discussion from race to ANY other identity construct such as class, gender, sexuality, ability, region, job class, family structure...ANYTHING but race. DiAngelo's work illuminated this defense mechanism in me. My world tilted when I had to just sit in a white, group identity and be seen solely in those terms. The hardest part, now, is seeing my ignorance reflected in others.

Jennifer: The hardest part about talking about race is having to switch gears based on my audience. Before 2020, my own discussions of my Blackness were tempered and restrained. Now, it is no longer personally palatable for me to ignore racial tension, and racist action and their effects on me and others. My selective silence positioned my often painful reality in a non-disruptive way that was comfortable to my non-Black peers.

Understand that I am not an expert on Black history nor do I speak on the unique experiences of Black people. When approached by Nanci to participate in an open dialogue on race, I was at the first stage of reconciling and reframing my feelings of anger, hopelessness, and frustration. Nanci's ask inspired and motivated me to see the opportunity and benefit of a candid conversation on race. We made a commitment to be each other's critical friend.

FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, WHAT IS THE *value* OF DIANGELO'S WORK?

Nanci: Look. I have a Canadian History degree, I'm a feminist, and LGBTQ2SI ally. I have read the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations, taught a unit on slavery, and incorporated Black History Month into the first unit of the second semester of ENG4CI. I'm still shocked that I could not connect, intuitively, the consequences of colonialism in Canada that produced the *Indian Act*, the residential school system, the Chinese Head tax, Japanese internment, and the razing of Africville, with the current, ongoing normalized and systemic racism in Canada for people of colour. This glaring disconnect has given me pause. I did not comprehend. I did not connect the dots that needed connecting. It's embarrassing. So, the value is that DiAngelo connected dots and gave me the conceptual framework to understand my past learning. DiAngelo's work made me want to take a wrecking ball to the system. However, I had to do the work on myself first, so DiAngelo led me to read Desmond Cole, Robyn Maynard, James Baldwin, and more. Ultimately, I felt that if I want to be part of the solution I have to re-educate myself.

Jennifer: *White Fragility* was the perfect jumping-off point for our candid conversation. Over the past couple of months, I had a burning curiosity about the construct of whiteness and how it is maintained. *White Fragility* offered simple explanations on the constructs of race. It highlights how racism is embedded within society. DiAngelo heightened my understanding of how my Blackness is perceived within white constructs.

I have been socialized to accept the status quo. I have been taught both explicitly and implicitly to temper my Blackness in white spaces in order to make white people feel comfortable with my presence, to adapt and be skilled at code-switching and maneuvering between my Black and white worlds, and to expect to be judged on the colour of my skin before my skills are put to the test. In other words, I have to show receipts to prove that I have earned a seat at the table.

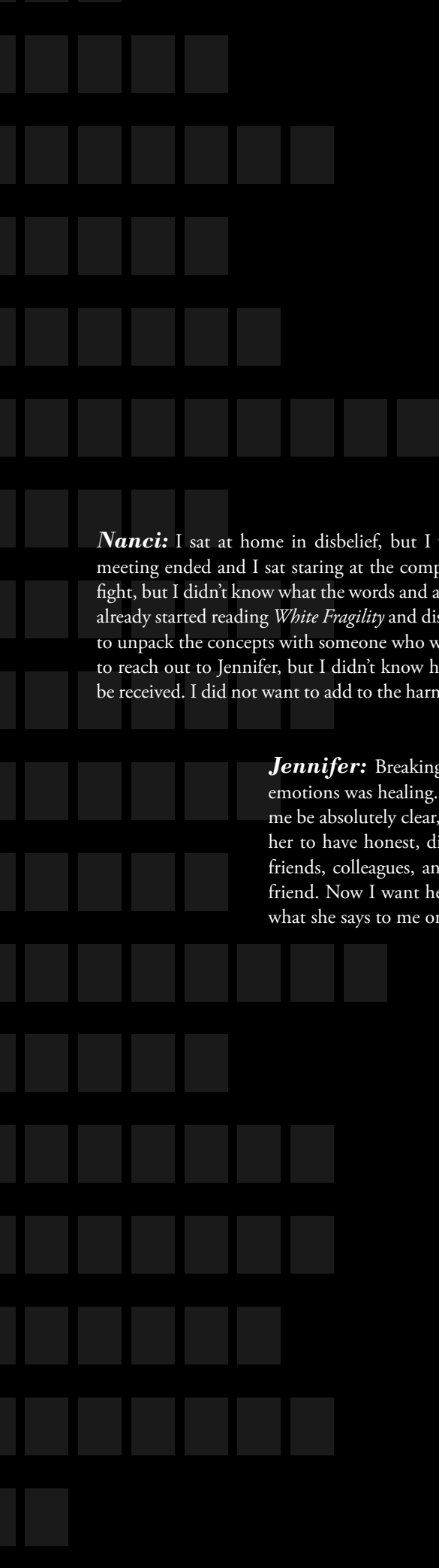
WHAT HAVE YOU *learned* DURING THIS CROSS-RACIAL DIALOGUE?

Nanci: Initially, I discovered that I would unconsciously change the conversation away from race to all the other “isms” when we talked because of my inability to relate to a white, group identity construct. I wasn’t used to seeing myself through a racial lens of whiteness. I’m used to seeing myself as this unique human-Nanci. I needed to practice seeing myself as white Nanci. There is a time to delve into intersectionality and Jennifer and I certainly have, but *White Fragility* has shown me that this cannot be done before discussing race exclusively. When I acknowledge my unearned privilege or advantage it doesn’t minimize my individual challenges. I can hold both experiences together simultaneously. It means, on top of those challenges, I didn’t have to also manage my race. Most significantly, I have learned that I do not know how Black Canadians experience life. First of all, if I am not experiencing systemic racism, I must be white. Secondly, I don’t have a say over whether or not it is real. As a white Canadian, I have a formidable responsibility to learn. I don’t need to make my social media platforms black for a day. I need to be teachable. I don’t need to be self-righteous. I need to self-assess my language, my assumptions, my awareness, my ignorance and yes, my advantage. It’s internal, not external.

Jennifer: If anyone says that it is easy to conduct cross-racial dialogue, they are lying to you. It takes delving into deep-seated emotional trauma and responses to get to a point of brave conversations. Our emotions drove us to question ourselves at the most basic level. I recognize that we share commonalities that bond us despite the differences in our race. We are co-conspirators on a journey of deeper understanding, healing, and action.

As my critical friend, Nanci was prepared to unpack the emotions and the uncomfortable conversation surrounding AMPA 2019 and Remote AMPA 2020. The most lavish OSSTF/FEESO 100th year celebrations and decorations could not hide the racial tension that filled the room on the last day of the general assembly. As a first time AMPA delegate coming down from the high of celebrating OSSTF/FEESO, I was reminded of my Blackness in that white space. Witnessing the collective silence and numbness to a fellow Black delegate’s pain following racist remarks and public humiliation forced me to take pause and evaluate my place in that space. I realized in that moment I had to be authentic; I had to clarify and understand. And ultimately, I had to see change. In order to do so, I actually had to get up and remove myself from the floor.

2020’s OSSTF/FEESO Remote Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly was the “in your face awakening” to the systemic forces at play preventing true progress of anti-Black racism within my union. I sat at home, remotely participating in disbelief and rage. I questioned whether or not there was space for me as a Black leader within this organization. I questioned whether or not the organization understood what being an ally meant. I felt emotionally taxed witnessing the effects of white silence.



Nanci: I sat at home in disbelief, but I was immobilized. The meeting ended and I sat staring at the computer monitor ready to fight, but I didn't know what the words and actions should be. I had already started reading *White Fragility* and discovering that I needed to unpack the concepts with someone who was not white. I wanted to reach out to Jennifer, but I didn't know how my message would be received. I did not want to add to the harm, confusion, and pain.

Jennifer: Breaking the silence with Nanci and revealing my raw emotions was healing. We did not talk around the issues of race, but let me be absolutely clear, the work doesn't end here for Nanci. Now I need her to have honest, difficult conversations around race with her white friends, colleagues, and families. I don't need to be Nanci's one Black friend. Now I want her to be a white ally publicly and to say in public what she says to me one on one.

WHAT ARE THE *next steps* FOR OSSTF/FEESO IN ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC RACISM?

Jennifer: First, the foundational structure of OSSTF/FEESO, including practices and norms, cannot be fixed overnight. As leaders, we need to be prepared for the uncertainty of change. We need to be ready to be uncomfortable. We need to have the difficult conversations that expose the reasons why access and participation have their limitations to Black members. I hope that tangible goals will be set and that all levels of leadership will be held accountable. I am looking to OSSTF/FEESO to re-evaluate what values and principles we want represented and then to rebuild. More importantly, I need the union to acknowledge that their Black members have experienced severe racial trauma and that the old ways of doing things pile on to that trauma. Finally, I request that OSSTF/FEESO practice racial humility and recognize that active Black membership has a role to play in the dismantling of systematic racism.

Nanci: We cannot dismantle systemic racism without changing our constitution, bylaws, policies, and practices. We need a complete audit from an outside source and then we need to implement recommendations and dismantle the system that those “in” the system can negotiate easily around those left out. This cannot be a one-time event. To dismantle systemic racism we need to continue to re-evaluate. For instance, some of our members believe that *Robert’s Rules of Order* is used to keep control in the hands of people savvy in these rules. I have seen these rules used well and loosely. OSSTF/FEESO meetings set their own working norms, but even these are predicated on a structure of knowledge of the rules as the guarantor of power. These rules are used as tools to shut down new ideas, new ways of knowing and expressing, as well as accountability to the membership. This needs to end and we need an overhaul of how we conduct our business.

Nanci Henderson is a teacher in District 24, Waterloo and **Jennifer Self** is a Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP) member in District 13, Durham and is a current member of the provincial Communications & Political Action Committee.

ONLINE EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

Looking to the
past | present |
and **FUTURE**

by Beyhan Farhadi



A week after a delayed school reopening, an education reporter asked me a question about online education during COVID-19 that left me feeling conflicted: Should families have had the choice to select virtual school for their children? Since the Ford government mandated two credits of e-learning as a graduation requirement, I have confidently commented on the inequities of mass-delivered online education, concentrated in the United States, which is driven by a handful of tech companies such as K12 Inc. and Pearson whose services are often subsidized by the state. Online education has continued to proliferate south of us, despite a documented lack of oversight, misuse of public funds, and low-retention rates compared to traditional schooling.

In Canada, full-credit online learning has been typically accessed by self-selected secondary students who have limited in-person course options. Most often these courses are delivered asynchronously with the majority targeting senior-level university-bound students because attrition rates are higher for junior-level students and students who require in-person support. British Columbia has long been leading in

e-learning activity but, according to a report produced by its teacher federation, online learners are typically concentrated in partially-funded independent schools, which are often religious. In contrast to the expansion of mass online education in the United States, Canada has been exclusively accessed by a limited demographic of students, whose success online is consistent with in-person schooling.

While COVID-19 has forced all of us to teach and learn online, we quickly learned that there was no precedent for success while teaching during a pandemic; perhaps the goal was a fantasy. In the absence of clear and equitable guidelines, the delivery of emergency remote learning was inconsistent, failing too many vulnerable families, and nearly all experts agreed that the sudden shift to online learning left teachers without the tools and training they needed to succeed. As a secondary teacher well prepared to transition online, even I struggled to balance my full-time responsibilities delivering remote instruction while caring for my children at home. It was an impossible position that we may have to confront again if we are unable to control community transmission of the virus.

ONLINE EDUCATION IN ONTARIO DURING COVID-19

When the school year drew to a close, unions representing education workers, parent advocacy groups, and education experts called on the Ministry of Education to work collaboratively on school reopening. The Ontario Human Rights Commission formally requested a Return-to-School Partnership Table, noting the negative impact school closures had on code-protected groups. They reminded the Minister of Education of his responsibility and the responsibility of school boards to meet the needs of vulnerable students, the plan for which should proceed collaboratively using a human rights-based approach. Despite their call, it was left to school boards and unions to manage the near weekly changes in educational policy as September approached.

What we have expected in the ab-

sence of provincial leadership has come to fruition and educational inequality has grown starker. Many families in non-designated school boards, who attend in-person, are confronting a digital divide that requires broadband infrastructure a decade too late, and First Nations students are often excluded entirely from planning. Many families choosing to learn online in designated boards are concentrated in lower-income racialized communities vulnerable to COVID-19. Some school boards withdrew the option for virtual learning in special education programs, forcing our most vulnerable students to physically attend school, while other boards required teachers to simultaneously instruct virtually and in-person, putting students in both modalities at a disadvantage.

It is a privilege and a burden to learn online depending on your circumstance. We know virtual schooling requires parental support that those with resources can supplement through private tutoring or pandemic pods, but is also a necessity for families who are living in under-resourced communities where COVID-19 presents a real threat to in-person learning. In the absence of sound planning, sufficient resources, and meaningful collaboration, students within and between school boards will have a significantly different experience learning online. Coupled with a chronic lack of investment in public education, which took another blow this year with attacks by the provincial government, the choice to learn online may feel like a choice between bad and worse.



WHAT ARE OTHER JURISDICTIONS DOING?

Jurisdictions across Canada do not consistently offer online education as an option for students. Quebec has acknowledged that it is not possible to teach simultaneously online and in-school, despite parents petitioning school boards for access to remote learning. British Columbia responded to the high demand for an online option by offering a transitional program, which provides limited online support with the intent of encouraging a return to in-person learning. Parents who choose this option are required to support learning and su-

pervise their children. In Alberta, online learning differs district to district and includes a combination of asynchronous and synchronous instruction that requires varying commitment from parents. The Jason Kenney government has taken the lid off of marketization by passing the *Choice in Education Act*, lifting the cap on charter schools and allowing them to bypass local public school boards who had first right of refusal for specialized programming requests. These measures prevented what has been the disaster of market competition in the

United States. Given Ontario has followed Alberta's lead closely, these developments are concerning.

Virtual schools in Ontario, which is a full-time K–12 synchronous model, are separated from formal e-learning programs, which are asynchronous and typically targeted to Grades 11 and 12. Online education is intended to provide a temporary measure to respond to an unprecedented crisis in public education, but it is likely that the infrastructure of virtual schools in densely populated school boards will continue beyond the pandemic.

OPPORTUNITIES IN ONLINE EDUCATION DURING COVID-19



The biggest threat to public education is corporate-influenced schooling and the greatest defence we have is labour unions and the collective agreements negotiated with employers to protect working and learning conditions. Before remote learning, teacher federations in British Columbia and Ontario were responsible for keeping the exploitation that typically accompanies the growth of online education at bay. This not only includes ballooning caps in classrooms and disintegrating boundaries on the workday, but also centralization that removes teachers from their local communities and often replaces them with standardized course content and underpaid adjunct instruc-

tors to evaluate and assess students. Contrary to the assertions the Ontario provincial government has made, teachers did not reject online education but rather the marketization of learning and the austerity that siphons funding out of the public system and displaces students from their local communities and in-person supports.

Years of provincial underinvestment in public education extends to technology-enabled learning that could have otherwise built capacity in teachers and learners and provided developmentally appropriate resources that meet the diverse needs of learners. Instead, we have an unutilized one-size-fits-all learn-

ing management system that we have paid an extraordinary amount to license. Public education advocates continue to call for sufficient investments to ensure online learning is accessed equitably by all students in the province, not only by those who are well resourced. This includes access to dedicated unionized teachers, whose collective agreements protect the quality of online education, and access to resources that ensure all students have access to learning opportunities online; this is not limited to a computer and a high-speed connection, but also to supports to navigate platforms and applications, and develop critical digital literacy that will protect them online.



THE INEQUITIES OF ONLINE EDUCATION

In the absence of a public unionized system to preserve the integrity of online education, we will inevitably see marketization encroach on classrooms. The once clearer divide between the public and private sectors is blurred in a neoliberal era where governments envision themselves as a business, whose objective is to extract efficiencies from the public system, and corporate non-profits offer “innovative” and “modern” solutions to social problems that further compound inequalities. The threat is not just outright privatization, but also willful neglect and the extraction of profit from crises such as COVID-19. When we apply the logic of a capitalist market economy to public governance, our most vulnerable families lose.

For teachers, online education has already raised questions about labour, especially in asynchronous environments where teaching “looks” different. The physical location of teaching has also changed as are public perceptions of work. With vastly differing policies, a teacher in City A may teach “dual-track” students virtually and face-to-face, simultaneously, compared to a teacher in City B, working as a dedicated virtual teacher. A teacher in City C may deliver a hybrid model that integrates online learning

for part-time students who can comfortably distance in-person, while a teacher in City D is teaching in-person to packed classrooms unable to distance. Further adult day school teachers who deliver the same curriculum are not only underfunded, and often unable to deliver online education, but also grossly exploited compared to their colleagues. The divisions are both inter and intra-regional and we must continue to vocally advocate for fair working conditions.

Students are also navigating inconsistencies in program delivery. In designated school boards, there is a mixture of in-person, synchronous, and asynchronous learning; this hybrid model is distinct from full-time virtual schooling that is synchronous. Fully synchronous classrooms can present challenges to students who are unable to work from a quiet environment, who struggle to maintain a high-speed internet connection and up-to-date equipment to support their learning. On the other hand, it can also motivate students who require the structure real-time learning provides; ideally, in-person learning would support students safely, with smaller class sizes. Learning (and teaching) online is also resource intensive. It requires access to a computer and a connection as well as

a quiet space to work and equipment to meaningfully participate, such as a microphone, headset, and video camera. Students may also share resources with family members who are also working from home and what was once the private space of a student’s life is often visible without a video-optional policy. Once video is compelled, student autonomy is compromised as others can stare at, analyze, and digitally capture their image without consent.

Inequities also extend to parents who, depending on the learner, may have to provide motivating variables to learn online. This includes cues to stay focused, support with technical difficulties, and fielding questions a student may withhold from asking publicly. Adolescence is a period of significant cognitive growth, which includes using complex thinking in personal decision-making, school work, and social life. It is also a period of identity development which takes place in the context of current events such as a pandemic, which has shown to significantly impact the mental health and well-being of young people. Managing these pressures requires partnership with parents, who are poised to observe signs of struggle that might otherwise be missed through the barrier of a screen.

THE FUTURE OF ONLINE EDUCATION

There is no doubt that the Ford government will capitalize on this crisis. Keeping online education in the hands of unionized teachers, while continuing to fight for fair working conditions and funding that makes access equitable for all students, is the task ahead of us. Teachers are in a leading position to show that online education can be done well in a public system, as well as to show the gaps that need to be addressed for vulnerable students in the system. The

question has never been a matter of technology, but rather the economic logic and value system that drives neglect of publicly-funded education. It is this logic that positions in-person schooling at risk, especially in non-designated school boards that are unable to guarantee the space required for safe distancing. It is this logic that positions virtual schools as the answer to insufficient funding, which is a journey toward disaster. Schools are community hubs,

not accreditation mills, and we need to approach online education with the principles of a public system central to which is the assertion that education is a right, not a privilege.

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FACT-CHECKING *in a* post-truth world

by: Chris Samuel

How do you write about facts in the era of Trump, Brexit, and Ford? Four years of collectively witnessing repeated, concussive attacks on the norms of public debate, science, and democracy make the challenges of defending truth seem insurmountable. Donald Trump ran for re-election on a strategy built around lying about everything from health care to the postal service. Daniel Dale's three and a half-minute fact-check of Trump's speech to the Republican convention (www.cnn.it/34fWDNF) in August is a triumph of reporting but a chilling reminder of life in a 'post-truth' world.ⁱ Worse, the stakes extend well beyond partisan political fights. COVID-19 conspiracies—ranging from simple anti-science libertarianism to outright racism—undermine efforts to curb the pandemic.

This is part of the difficulty about writing about facts and post-truth: how panicked should we feel? While the United States is increasingly and horrifyingly showing us the logical conclusions of post-truth politics, Ontario has not yet descended to that level. Nonetheless, racism in Ontario is real. We have COVID-19 conspiracy theorists and anti-maskers here too. The Ford Conservatives based their 2018 election strategy on populist rhetoric and a scant platform. During the last round of bargaining, OSSTF/FEESO and our allies churned out fact-check after fact-check to correct the Minister of Education's frequent mischaracterizations of the bargaining process, policy disagreements, and funding claims. At the same time, Canadians appear to have trust in science and its spokespeople.

If we are falling further into a world of post-truth politics, it is worth asking, what is the impact of fact-checking? This article looks at several studies and analyses related to the spread of false claims, fact-checking, political support, and policy preferences to see what the research tells us.

Here are some spoilers for people who don't want to read all the way through—and also for people who are going to read all the way through, but who may want to take some deep breaths and prepare themselves first.

- Fact-checking appears to bring people closer to the truth. That is, it appears to correct or at least moderate false beliefs.
- At the same time, fact-checking does not appear to significantly change political behaviour. Even when politicians are shown to be making false statements, their supporters continue to support them.
- Perceptions of credibility and authoritativeness outweigh the actual truth-content of individual statements in forming political opinion.

These findings suggest that fact-checking is a necessary part of political communications, but it is not enough on its own. Instead, successful political communication depends on building up credibility over a longer period. It is this credibility that gives weight to political communications rather than the actual truth-content of any given claim or counter-claim.

Let's dive into some research.

First, there's an important study by Vosoughi et al. investigating the spread of true and false news online. In their 2018 study, the authors examined what they called 'rumour cascades' on Twitter from 2006 to 2017. Rumour cascades are "instances of a rumour-spreading pattern that exhibit an unbroken retweet chain with a common, singular origin."ⁱⁱ Cascades begin with a user making an assertion about a topic in a tweet (including text, photos, and/or hyperlinks), which is then propagated through re-tweets. The study found approximately 126,000 cascades, which were spread by 3 million people 4.5 million times.

The authors found that false rumours spread "significantly faster, deeper and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information."ⁱⁱⁱ Importantly and somewhat discouragingly, the authors were able to control for the extent to which bots—automated Twitter accounts—were involved in spreading both true and false news. They found that humans were more likely than bots to spread false news. This type of study is not able to identify the reason why falsehoods tend to spread faster, but the authors suggest there is good reason to believe it is because false claims tend to be more novel and express greater surprise. By contrast, true claims tended to inspire expressions of sadness and trust. It appears that novelty and outrage outpace empathy, at least on Twitter. This dynamic may put fact-checkers at a built-in disadvantage. At least in terms of novelty, insofar as fact-checkers are responding to an existing claim, then their message is already less novel than the falsehood it challenges.

The dynamic Vosoughi et al. identify is concerning, but it actually gets worse. Two studies look specifically at the cognitive and behavioural impacts of fact-checking. These studies ask: when people receive fact-checks, do they update their beliefs from a false belief to a true one? As importantly, are people less likely to support a politician when they've been shown to make false statements? The results are surprising.

In 2019, Nyhan et al. used two studies to look specifically at the impact of Trump's falsehoods on his supporters and supporters of Hillary Clinton. The studies broke participants into four groups and gave each group an article including one of the following: a false claim, a fact-check, a fact-check with a rebuttal, or a fact-check with a rebuttal and an attack on the official source cited by the fact-check. On the positive side, exposure to fact-checks did tend to reduce misinformation among both Clinton and Trump supporters. Unfortunately, prior beliefs and political commitments then start to creep in. When they received an article that included a fact-check, Clinton supporters were more likely to see the article as fair and balanced, while Trump supporters were more



likely to see it as less accurate and less fair. In fact, it did not appear to matter whether the article included an attack on the fact-check's source: the mere presence of a fact-check made Trump supporters more likely to perceive the article as biased. Worse, even though Trump supporters were more likely to believe the truth after seeing the fact-check, they still managed to see the source of truth as biased and re-confirm their support for Trump. "In other words, factual corrections can achieve the limited objective of creating a more informed citizenry but struggle to change citizens' minds about whom to support."^{iv}

In 2020, Barrera et al. found similar results in their study of extreme right-wing candidate in the 2017 French presidential elections, Marine Le Pen.^v In a study designed similarly to Nyhan et al.'s, Barrera et al. exposed participants to a neutral article, an article with a fact about immigration, an article with a false claim about immigration (made by Marine Le Pen), or an article with a false claim plus a fact-check. Here again they found that participants updated their factual knowledge after seeing a fact-check (that is, they switched from a false belief about immigration to a true belief about immigration). Interestingly, participants who knew the truth before seeing a false claim were not persuaded by the claim. Participants who did not know the truth before seeing the false claim moved further away from the truth. Put another way, false claims appeared to have little influence on people who already know the truth about an issue, but they make ill-informed people even more ill-informed.

Further, like Nyhan et al., they found that awareness of

false claims did not change support for Marine Le Pen. In fact, supporters were more likely to support Le Pen and her position on immigration even after accepting that she had lied about people's reasons for immigrating and the demographic make-up of immigrants. The authors speculate that this might be a result of exposure to true and false statements increasing the relevance of the issue, or its salience, to the audience. So, Le Pen supporters, who are already opposed to immigration, are likely to become more skeptical simply by thinking about immigration, regardless of whether they are well-informed or poorly informed about the issue.

Although a departure from the specific question of false claims and fact-checks, an earlier study about how people interpret policy proposals is also worth considering. In this study, Kahan et al. investigated whether exposure to scientific evidence about Outpatient Commitment Laws (OCLs) was likely to make people more or less likely to support OCL proposals. OCLs are laws that allow courts to mandate a person with a mental illness to undergo treatment while living in the community, with the threat of further evaluation and/or institutionalization if they refuse to comply with treatment orders. At the time of the study, the evidence supporting the effectiveness of OCLs was conflicted and advocates for people with mental illnesses were divided on whether the restrictions on freedom that OCLs impose are well justified.

What was particularly interesting about this study was not whether people updated their beliefs after exposure to evidence; it was that how people interpreted the evidence itself depended on prior beliefs and worldviews. In essence, people

who are already likely to view the world through a hierarchical and communitarian lens are more likely to interpret the evidence as supporting OCLs. People who are more egalitarian and individualistic are more likely to read the same evidence as showing that OCLs are ineffective and therefore a poor justification for restricting people's liberties.^{vi} This takes the findings of Barrera et al. and Nyhan et al.—that people can update their beliefs about political issues without changing their behaviour in relation to these issues—and amplifies it. Not only do people put distance between their political opinions and facts, they interpret the facts themselves according to their pre-existing belief structures.

By now, you're probably getting a clear picture of the role of fact-checking. On the one hand, progressive and truth-loving organizations cannot allow false claims to go unchallenged. On the other hand, they need to recognize the limited impact that fact-checking has. It increases the audience's likelihood of holding a true belief, but it does not necessarily influence their support for particular policies or politicians.

What does this mean in terms of political strategy?

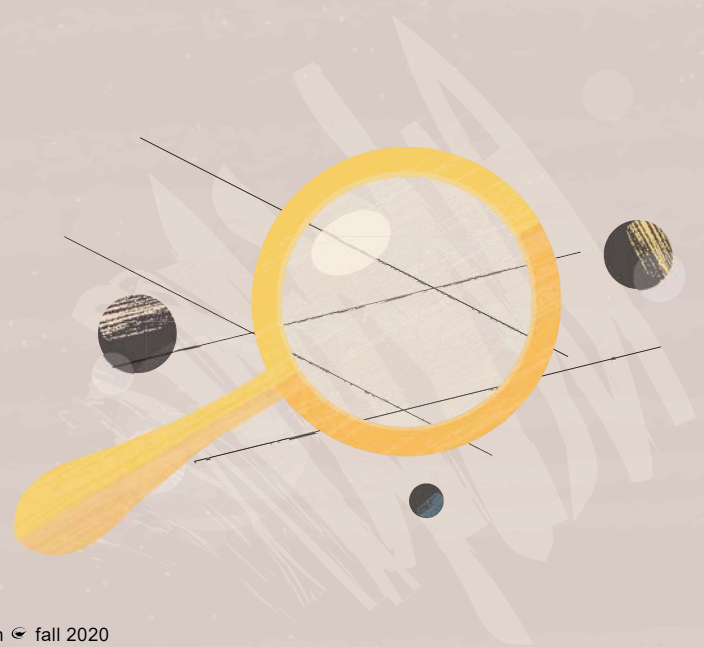
This research points toward a strategy based on building up credibility. As Kahan et al. note, people interpret political and policy discussions through a 'cultural credibility heuristic': "Because individuals often lack the time and expertise to evaluate competing forms of empirical data, they rely on those whose judgment they trust to tell them what claims to accept. The people they trust, it turns out, are ones who share their defining group commitments."^{vii} In practical terms, the notion of cultural credibility means becoming both a reliable source of information and analysis and doing so in a way that is relevant to the target audience.

As Brown argues, the way experts talk about evidence often ignores the lived experience and the context of either the general public or a specific target audience.^{viii} This can leave experts looking condescending and the audience feeling shamed or stigmatized. It creates a divide between 'knowers' and 'followers' rather than fostering the kind of shared cultural commitments Kahan et al. suggest people rely on to interpret facts and evidence. As Brown puts it, "The danger of accepting a post-truth characterisation is that we abandon this empowering side of the evidence movement just as it's winning through. Evidence and expertise have too often looked like counsel to the knowing, rather than what we could be making them: the means by which the less powerful can call the world to account."

Combatting the forces of post-truth, then, means progressive groups need to collaboratively build up both their own credibility as evidence-based participants in public debates. At the same time, the presentation of evidence needs to connect facts to the lived experience of the intended audience. If we are sliding into a post-truth world—or if we're already there—then we can't rely on the power of truth itself to overcome that drift. It will take long-term investment in building capacity, credibility, and community.

Chris Samuel works as the Public Policy Analyst at OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office.

- i Daniel Dale, Daniel Dale: President Trump is a serial liar (CNN Politics, 2020).
- ii Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy, and Sinan Aral, "The spread of true and false news online," *Science* 359, no. 6380 (2018): 1, [dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.aap9559](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aap9559).
- iii Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral 2.
- iv Brendan Nyhan et al., "Taking Fact-Checks Literally But Not Seriously? The Effects of Journalistic Fact-Checking on Factual Beliefs and Candidate Favorability," *Political Behavior* (2019/01/21 2019): 4-5, [dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11109-019-09528-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-019-09528-x).
- v Oscar Barrera et al., "Facts, alternative facts, and fact checking in times of post-truth politics," *Journal of Public Economics* 182 (2020/02/01/ 2020), [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2019.104123](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2019.104123).
- vi Dan M. Kahan et al., "Cultural cognition and public policy: The case of outpatient commitment laws," *Law and Human Behavior* 34, no. 2 (2010), [dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10979-008-9174-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10979-008-9174-4).
- vii Kahan et al. 136.
- viii Tracey Brown, "Evidence, expertise, and facts in a 'post-truth' society," *BMJ* 355 (2016): 1, [dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.i6467](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.i6467).



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OSSTF/FEESO:

LE RACISME, RACISM, L'OPPRESSION, OPPRESSION, L'ÉGALITÉ EQUITY

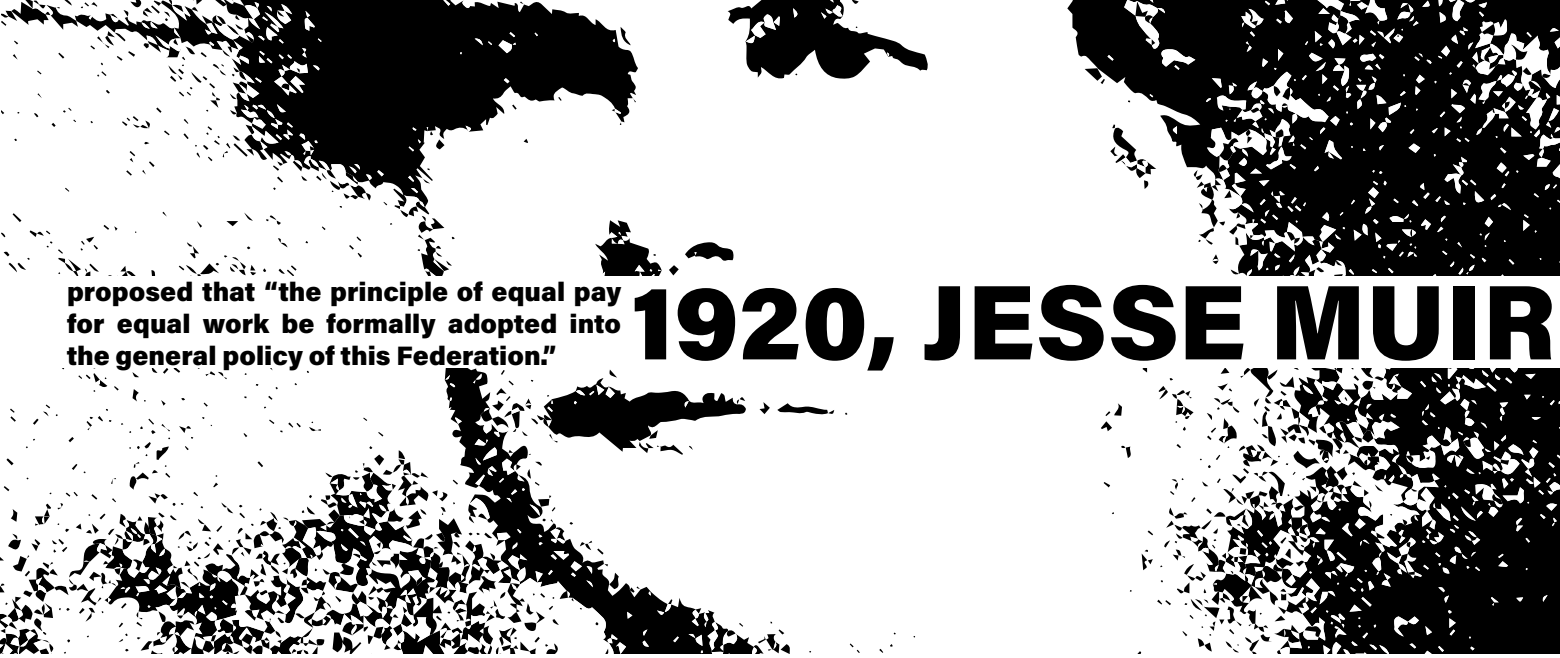
PAR L'EXÉCUTIF PROVINCIAL D'OSSTF/FEESO

L'histoire du mouvement syndical dans ce pays est l'histoire de la lutte pour les droits des travailleuses et des travailleurs. Toutefois, les narrateurs de cette histoire ont souvent et à maintes reprises laissé de côté les histoires et expériences des Noirs, des Autochtones et des travailleuses et travailleurs de couleur. Notre avenir comme syndicat doit aborder cette flagrante omission. Cette histoire a donné lieu à un avancement institutionnel des travailleuses et travailleurs blancs devant les travailleuses et travailleurs noirs, autochtones et de couleur. Pour OSSTF/FEESO, cela fait également partie de notre histoire et nous ne devons pas avoir peur de relever le défi de cet héritage ou de ce passé. Il ne faut pas être complice en maintenant le statu quo.

/suite à la page 30

BY THE OSSTF/FEESO PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE

The history of organized labour in this country is the history of the fight for the rights of workers. However, the narrators of this history have often and repeatedly left out the stories and experiences of Black, Indigenous, and workers of colour. Our future as labour must address this glaring omission. This history has resulted in the institutional advancement of white workers over Black workers, Indigenous workers, and workers of colour. This is also part of the history of OSSTF/FEESO and we must not be afraid to meet the challenges of this legacy. We must not be complicit in maintaining the status quo.



proposed that “the principle of equal pay for equal work be formally adopted into the general policy of this Federation.”

1920, JESSE MUIR

For generations, members of Black, African, and Caribbean communities have been calling out anti-Black racism and oppression. With the increase in awareness of anti-Black racism, hatred, and violence across North America and globally, racialized peoples and co-conspirators have compelled the world to recognize the urgent need for action and change. For far too long, many of us have been ignorant of these acts and have not faced the realities of living with the detrimental impact of racism and colonialism. What is clear is that, as a society, we have normalized discrimination without acknowledging that the effects are a clear and present danger for racialized and Indigenous peoples. Such discrimination is unacceptable and the goal must be to eliminate racism and its pernicious effects of Canadian society.

Of course, OSSTF/FEESO is not immune to this troubled history of racism in Canada. We recognize that structural and systemic racism as well as colonialism is still being experienced by groups of members within OSSTF/FEESO. We are proud to be the voice of labour for over 60,000 members of Ontario’s education workforce. Yet, despite our efforts to date, we have fallen short in ensuring equity of access among our own membership. Our organizational structures have produced unintended consequences, leaving some groups in the membership out of the decision-making

process. Simply put, we must recognize that there are groups of members that have been historically marginalized by our own structures, policies, and procedures. This recognition may make us uncomfortable, and it should. While it is difficult to accept our collective shortcomings, the time has come to open the organization up to a thorough review and scrutiny at both the local and provincial levels. This work is not easy, it is not quick, and it must be done.

The responsibility of those in leadership positions to do better is charged to us by our Equity Statement which, in part, says: “The marginalization of certain groups must be specifically recognized. For OSSTF/FEESO, these groups include, but are not necessarily limited to, women, people of colour, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, questioning, two-spirit, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, people with disabilities, francophone, and those whose participation is impeded because of their creed, economic circumstances or family status.” We have always made equity a priority; however, we continue to reimagine what it actually looks like in OSSTF/FEESO and we are working to better recognize the diverse narratives of members who experience oppression.

As an organization over 100 years old, OSSTF/FEESO has always grounded its work in equity. At our first Annual General Meeting in 1920 a motion was

passed unanimously, formalizing that the “principle of equal pay for equal work be formally adopted into the general policy of this Federation.” Jesse Muir’s motion was a first step in the organization’s drive to use policy and practice to shape change and to enhance equity. OSSTF/FEESO’s Equity Statement is the extension of the work of our earliest members. The statement recognizes that our members must see themselves reflected in the make-up of our organization. We must see ourselves in our goals, our structures, and our practices. It is a statement that honours the steps we have taken, and that reminds us that the work of equity is ongoing: “OSSTF/FEESO is a democratic union that recognizes the importance of encouraging and supporting involvement by all members, while recognizing that some members have historically been marginalized.” This means we must regularly reflect on where we have been and where we can and must still go.

In 2007, the delegates at the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA) directed the Provincial Executive to strike a provincial work group to design a process to determine the level of participation of members of equity seeking groups. This led to the creation of the Equity Officer, an in-house staff Equity Work Group, a member-based Equity Advisory Work Group, and a budget line committed to addressing barriers to equity in OSSTF/FEESO. As these internal structures began to take shape, OSSTF/FEESO continued to build a roster of professional development workshops for members that included those that provided learning in addressing oppression and discrimination rooted in racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, colonialism, and classism. We know, however, that workshops alone do not change the structure and practices of an organization.

The Member Participation Survey, which was concluded in 2016, showed that members of equity-seeking groups are starting to be more involved than previously. However, what was also evident is some groups are still less likely to hold formal Federation roles in many

of the highest governing bodies of OSSTF/FEESO. These findings led the membership to endorse two important motions at AMPA 2016. First, it passed a motion directing OSSTF/FEESO to provide its leaders with ongoing training in equity and anti-oppression. Second, delegates at the 2016 convention also directed their union to develop a formal, intensive mentorship program designed to support members from equity-seeking groups who wish to increase their involvement in Federation leadership. These steps complement the already existing work of the provincial Human Rights Committee, the Status of Women Committee, and our dedication to projects that support international human rights and labour solidarity. This work has also led to the release of curriculum and training resources addressing homophobia, transphobia, sexism, violence against women, and poverty. Our approach to equity recognizes the importance of avoiding a single story while also embracing the uniqueness of intersectional identities on lived experiences of oppression.

Also in 2016, in an effort to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation, OSSTF/FEESO established the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Advisory Work Group to advise the Provincial Executive on any matters related to issues affecting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. With this, the members of the work group have been instrumental in assisting the Federation in implementing concrete actions as we continue to work towards reconciliation.

This history does not mean we have addressed issues of inequity fully, but it does situate the organization with foundational steps to continue challenging ourselves and our structures. We are not shy of the work that needs to be done. It continues to reflect OSSTF/FEESO’s efforts across the broader labour movement, amongst our employers, and within the education system.

These steps matter and they have created some structural and practical change; however, despite our ongoing

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Pendant des générations, les membres des communautés noires, africaines et des Caraïbes dénoncent le racisme et l’oppression anti-noir. Grâce à une plus forte sensibilisation au racisme, à la haine et à la violence anti-noir partout en Amérique du Nord et partout dans le monde, les peuples racialisés et les coconspirateurs ont interpellé le monde à reconnaître le besoin urgent pour l’action et le changement. Depuis fort trop longtemps, bon nombre d’entre nous avons été ignorants de ces actes et n’avons pas fait face aux réalités des effets préjudiciables du racisme et du colonialisme dans notre vie. Ce qui est clair, c’est que comme société nous avons normalisé la discrimination sans reconnaître que les effets constituent un danger évident et réel pour les peuples racialisés et autochtones. Il s’agit d’une attitude bien inférieure à ce qui devrait être acceptable. Une telle discrimination est inacceptable et le but doit être d’éliminer le racisme et ses effets néfastes sur la société canadienne.

Bien entendu, OSSTF/FEESO n’est pas à l’abri de cette histoire tourmentée au Canada. Nous reconnaissons que le racisme structurel et systémique ainsi que le colonialisme font toujours partie de l’expérience de groupes de membres au sein d’OSSTF/FEESO. Nous sommes fiers d’être la voix de la main d’œuvre représentant plus de 60 000 membres en éducation de l’Ontario. Cependant, malgré nos efforts à ce jour, nous avons manqué de garantir un accès équitable parmi nos propres membres. Nos structures organisationnelles ont donné lieu à des conséquences inattendues, laissant certains groupes parmi nos membres hors du processus de prise de décision. Simplement dit, nous devons reconnaître qu’il y a des groupes de membres qui ont été historiquement marginalisés par nos structures, nos politiques et nos procédures. Cette reconnaissance pourrait nous rendre mal à l’aise, à juste titre. Bien qu’il soit difficile d’accepter nos lacunes collectives, le temps est maintenant venu d’ouvrir l’organisme à une critique et à un examen approfondis,

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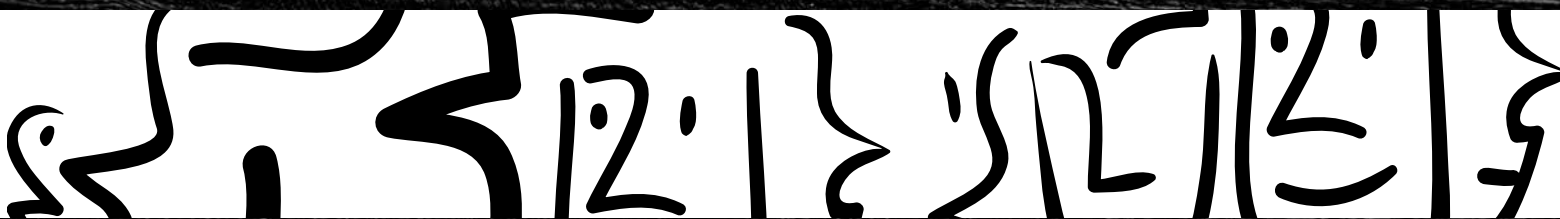
in an effort to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation, OSSTF/FEESO established The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Advisory Work Group

2016, FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT ADVISORY WORK GROUP



the survey showed that members of equity-seeking groups are starting to be more involved than previously

2016, MEMBER PARTICIPATION SURVEY



the 2016 convention also directed their union to develop a formal, intensive mentorship program designed to support members from equity-seeking groups

2016, MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



equity
mentorship
program



programme de
mentorat en
matière d'égalité

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efforts, is it clear that in addressing colonialism, anti-Black racism, and racial discrimination in general, we have fallen well short in our efforts as a Federation. We accept this, own it, and commit to making it a priority.

Looking closely at who we are as a union and at our recent experiences requires the organization to reconsider areas of growth and challenge. It is no longer sufficient for us to simply stop at saying we have made mistakes. Rather, we must actively identify where systemic discrimination has manifested in our structures and take concrete action in addressing them. With great humility, we are taking on this responsibility.

As events have unfolded both inside and outside the Federation, it has been an extremely difficult time for many OSSTF/FEESO members who have experienced the pain of systemic racism and the barriers it creates. The Provincial Executive has spent time reflecting on the impact of oppression and systemic racism—specifically anti-Black racism—and on the steps needed to begin to change the structure and culture in the union.

ing the systemic barriers which exist in OSSTF/FEESO. Most importantly, the Provincial Executive has sought the expertise of an external consultant with extensive experience in assisting organizations to make the culture shift necessary to challenge all forms of oppression and discrimination—but in particular, anti-Black racism. We are pleased to be working with Kike Ojo-Thompson of the KOJO Institute.

Over the last months we have prioritized listening to members, and we will continue to do so. Many of you have reached out to express your opinion, and while some were difficult to hear, your opinions matter. At the same time, we are also applying what we are learning in our work with the KOJO Institute to acknowledge, affirm, and take account the ways in which systemic oppression and discrimination occurs within OSSTF/FEESO. In doing so, our actions must be courageous and they must be meaningful. They must come from listening carefully to the membership—but, in particular, those with lived experiences from marginalized groups—and hearing what obstacles exist. To move forward in our com-

mitment to addressing structural and institutional racism, our actions must also be intentional so that we can be held accountable.

Over time, we will need to assess what has changed and

what is the impact. Looking ahead, we will undertake an intense review of OSSTF/FEESO and to do this well we must also be prepared to reflect on our structures, policies, and priorities on an on-going basis. Regular review of our work and its efficacy in addressing systemic racism is paramount to getting this work on the right path. It

is essential in our efforts to be accountable to the membership by assessing if we are sufficiently fulfilling our commitment to confronting and addressing oppression. Removing barriers to member

participation is going to take courage for those in leadership positions to face our own biases and acknowledge the privileges that have benefited some of us.

Recent member experiences and feedback have led to some initial steps that OSSTF/FEESO is taking, including:

- A review of our Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA) and recommendations to address practices, policies, and procedures that add to oppression and racism in our organization;
- Training of Provincial Office staff and Provincial Executive;
- Increased membership in the Equity Advisory Work Group;
- Creating workshops and resources on Addressing Anti-Black Racism, Allyship, Black History, and Women's History;
- Provincial Council (September) passing a number of motions, including the establishment of equity caucuses at future OSSTF/FEESO provincial meetings and conferences, and a Black Persons and Persons of Colour Advisory Work Group.

OSSTF/FEESO commits to be a union that is principally guided by anti-oppressive approaches to decision making. For this transformational change to happen, we must have the institutional conviction to examine OSSTF/FEESO priorities, structures, rules and most especially how groups of members have not had equal access to leadership opportunities with their union. Still, we cannot do this in isolation just as a Provincial Executive. This change will need to be done together with the membership. Along the way, even with the best intentions, we may falter and misstep in our approach and/or efforts in addressing colonialism, anti-Black racism, racism, as well as other forms of discrimination. When that happens, we will also need to rely on receiving critical feedback, and be willing to consider new ideas. Together, as an organization with over 60,000 members, representing hundreds of different job classes in communities large and small, we will need to identify where systemic racism and bias exist and is normalized in our union.

• **Training of Provincial Office staff and Provincial Executive;**

• **A review of our Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA) and recommendations to address practices, policies, and procedures that add to oppression and racism in our organization;**

• **Increased membership in the Equity Advisory Work Group;**

• **Creating workshops and resources on Addressing Anti-Black Racism, Allyship, Black History, and Women's History;**

• **Provincial Council (September) passing a number of motions, including the establishment of equity caucuses at future OSSTF/FEESO provincial meetings and conferences, and a Black Persons and Persons of Colour Advisory Work Group.**

As a starting point, we have made use of the internal expertise which exists in the Federation and we continue to work with our Equity Officer on issues of accountability and identify-

OSSTF/FEESO is also actively taking responsibility for this work as part of labour's greater job to identify and address the ways that Canadian colonial structures have and continue to limit opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and workers of colour to take on leadership roles in the labour movement. Working with the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the Ontario Teachers' Federation, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Ontario Federation of Labour, as well as other labour and community partners, we must be part of a larger political force that uses anti-oppression approaches in all we do. This includes helping elect a government that believes in social justice, equity, and inclusion. It means we have to make equity an election issue and use our skills as political activists to shape the political lens of upcoming elections. In the months ahead, election readiness work will be focused, in part, on advocating for a society that openly questions its historic systems of oppression. We must act as a united labour force to help elect candidates to government who hold principles that are based in equity and social justice.

Ultimately, we need to embrace the necessary work that is ahead of us. We need to champion new ways of thinking. We need to implement changes required to address and eliminate anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, racial and other forms of discrimination in OSSTF/FEESO and our communities.

As an organization we will all benefit from this work and we will be stronger as a membership because of it.

The **Provincial Executive** is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Federation and oversees the Provincial Office. The Provincial Executive answers to the members through the Provincial Council.

The current members include: Harvey Bischof, President; Paul Caccamo, Vice-President; Karen Littlewood, Vice-President; Earl Burt, Treasurer; Martha Hradowy, Executive Officer; Malini Leahy, Executive Officer and Dave Warda, Executive Officer.

tant aux niveaux local que provincial. Ce n'est pas une tâche facile ou rapide, mais bien une tâche nécessaire.

La responsabilité de celles et ceux dans des postes de direction de mieux faire nous est imposée par notre Déclaration en matière d'égalité qui, en partie, stipule : « L'exclusion de certains groupes doit être clairement reconnue. Pour OSSTF/FEESO, ces groupes comprennent notamment, mais sans s'y limiter, les femmes, les personnes de couleur, les lesbiennes, les gais, les bisexués, les transgenres, les intersexués, les personnes en questionnement, les bispirituels, les Premières Nations, les Inuits, les Métis, les personnes handicapées, les francophones et ceux dont la participation est entravée en raison de circonstances économiques ou de la situation familiale. » Nous avons toujours priorisé l'égalité, toutefois, nous continuons de repenser à quoi elle ressemble chez OSSTF/FEESO et nous travaillons à mieux reconnaître les récits ou histoires variés des membres qui sont victimes d'oppression.

À titre d'organisme qui date de plus de 100 ans, OSSTF/FEESO a toujours ancré son travail dans l'égalité. À notre première Assemblée générale annuelle en 1920, une résolution a été adoptée à l'unanimité, formalisant que « le principe du salaire égal pour un travail égal soit formellement adopté dans la politique générale de la Fédération ».

La résolution de Jesse Muir était la première étape dans les efforts de l'organisation de se servir des politiques et des pratiques pour façonner le changement et améliorer l'égalité. La Déclaration en matière d'égalité d'OSSTF/FEESO est le prolongement du travail de nos premiers membres. Cette déclaration reconnaît que nos membres doivent se reconnaître dans la composition de notre organisation. Nous devons nous reconnaître dans nos buts, dans nos structures et dans nos pratiques. C'est une déclaration qui rend hommage aux démarches que nous avons entreprises et qui nous rappelle que les efforts en matière d'égalité sont incessants : « OSSTF/FEESO est un syndicat démocratique qui recon-

naît l'importance d'encourager et de soutenir la participation de tous les membres tout en covenant que certains de ses membres ont été traditionnellement exclus. Pour que la Fédération excelle, tous les membres doivent se retrouver dans ses buts, ses structures et ses pratiques ». Cela signifie que nous devons régulièrement réfléchir à nos origines et à la direction que nous pouvons et devons toujours prendre.

En 2007, les délégués à la Réunion annuelle de l'Assemblée provinciale (RAAP) ont dirigé l'Exécutif provincial à mettre en place un groupe de travail provincial conçu pour élaborer un processus visant à déterminer le niveau de participation des membres des groupes à la recherche d'égalité. Cela a mené à la création du poste d'agent en matière d'égalité, d'un groupe de travail interne en matière d'égalité du personnel, d'un groupe de travail consultatif en matière d'égalité formé de membres et d'une ligne budgétaire réservée à l'élimination des obstacles à l'égalité au sein d'OSSTF/FEESO. Alors que ces structures internes commençaient à prendre forme, OSSTF/FEESO a continué de créer une série d'ateliers de perfectionnement professionnel à l'intention des membres, qui offrent un apprentissage sur les façons d'aborder l'oppression et la discrimination enracinées dans le racisme, le sexisme, l'homophobie et la transphobie, le colonialisme et le classicisme. Nous savons, toutefois, que les ateliers à eux seuls ne changent pas la structure et les pratiques d'un organisme.

Le Sondage sur la participation des membres, qui a pris fin en 2016, démontre que les membres des groupes à la recherche d'égalité commencent à participer dans une plus grande mesure que par le passé. Toutefois, ce qui était également évident, c'est qu'il est toujours moins vraisemblable que les membres de certains groupes assument des rôles formels au sein de la Fédération dans bon nombre des organes de gouvernance les plus élevés au sein d'OSSTF/FEESO. Ces constatations ont poussé les membres à adopter deux importantes résolutions à la RAAP 2016. Tout d'abord,

elle a adopté une résolution dirigeant OSSTF/FEESO à fournir à ses dirigeants une formation continue en matière d'égalité et d'anti-oppression. En deuxième lieu, les délégués à la convention de 2016 ont également dirigé leur syndicat à élaborer un programme intensif formel de mentorat conçu pour appuyer les membres de groupes à la recherche d'égalité qui désirent participer davantage à la direction de la Fédération. Ces démarches s'ajoutent au travail existant du Comité des droits de la personne et du Comité du statut de la femme au niveau provincial et à notre dévouement envers les projets qui appuient les droits de la personne et la solidarité syndicale à l'échelle mondiale. Ce travail a également mené à la publication ou parution de ressources de curriculum et de formation pour aborder l'homophobie, la transphobie, le sexisme, la violence faite aux femmes et la pauvreté. Notre approche à l'égalité reconnaît l'importance d'éviter un récit unique tout en acceptant le caractère unique des identités intersectionnelles sur les expériences vécues d'oppression.

Également en 2016, dans le but de redresser le legs des écoles résidentielles et de faire avancer le processus de la réconciliation canadienne, OSSTF/FEESO a mis sur pied le Groupe de travail consultatif des Premières Nations, Métis et Inuits pour conseiller l'Exécutif provincial sur toute question touchant les peuples des Premières Nations, Métis et Inuits. Par conséquent, les membres de ce groupe de travail ont largement contribué à aider la Fédération à mettre en place des actions concrètes alors que nous poursuivons nos efforts vers la réconciliation.

Cette histoire ne signifie pas que nous avons complètement abordé les questions d'inégalité, mais elle offre à notre organisme les étapes fondamentales pour continuer à nous remettre en cause et à repenser nos structures. Nous n'avons pas peur du travail qui reste à faire. Notre histoire continue de refléter les efforts d'OSSTF/FEESO sur l'ensemble plus vaste du mouvement syndical, parmi nos employeurs et au sein du système d'éducation.

Ces étapes sont importantes et elles ont donné lieu à certains changements structurels et pratiques, toutefois, malgré nos efforts continus, il est clair qu'en abordant le colonialisme, le racisme anti-noir et la discrimination raciale en général, nos efforts se sont avérés bien insuffisants à titre de Fédération. Nous nous devons d'accepter ce fait, de le reconnaître et d'en faire une priorité.

L'examen minutieux de qui nous sommes à titre de syndicat et de nos expériences récentes exige que l'organisme repense les domaines de la croissance et du défi. Il ne suffit plus pour nous de simplement nous arrêter après avoir admis nos erreurs. Il faut plutôt cerner activement où la discrimination systémique s'est manifestée dans nos structures et prendre des actions concrètes pour y remédier. Dans la plus grande humilité, nous acceptons cette responsabilité.

Alors que des événements se sont déroulés tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur de la Fédération, cela a été une période des plus difficiles pour de nombreux membres d'OSSTF/FEESO qui ont subi la douleur du racisme systémique et les obstacles qu'il crée. L'Exécutif provincial a passé un certain temps à réfléchir sur l'impact de l'oppression et du racisme systémique—surtout le racisme anti-noir—et sur les étapes requises pour commencer à changer la structure et la culture du syndicat.

Comme point de départ, nous avons puisé dans l'expertise interne qui existe au sein de la Fédération et nous continuons de travailler en collaboration avec notre agente en matière d'égalité sur les questions de la responsabilité et de la détermination des obstacles systémiques qui existent au sein d'OSSTF/FEESO. Mais surtout, l'Exécutif provincial a retenu l'expertise d'un expert-conseil externe ayant une vaste expérience dans l'aide aux organismes qui désirent procéder au changement de culture requis pour contrer toutes les formes d'oppression et de discrimination—mais en particulier le racisme anti-noir. Nous sommes heureux de travailler en collaboration avec Kike Ojo-Thompson, du KOJO Institute.

Au cours des derniers mois, nous avons

mis la priorité sur l'écoute des membres et nous continuerons ainsi. Nombreux sont celles et ceux d'entre vous qui nous ont approchés pour exprimer votre opinion et, bien que difficile à entendre dans certains cas, votre opinion nous est importante. Du même coup, nous appliquons également ce que nous apprenons dans le cadre de notre travail en collaboration avec le KOJO Institute, c'est-à-dire de reconnaître et d'affirmer les façons auxquelles l'oppression systémique et la discrimination se manifestent au sein d'OSSTF/FEESO et d'en tenir compte. Ce faisant ou dans ce cadre, nos actions doivent être courageuses et pertinentes. Elles doivent émaner d'une écoute minutieuse auprès des membres—mais surtout auprès de celles et ceux des groupes marginalisés ayant des expériences vécues et de la découverte des obstacles qui existent. Afin d'avancer dans notre engagement pour aborder le racisme structurel et institutionnel, nos actions doivent également être intentionnelles pour que nous puissions en être tenus responsables.

Au fil du temps, nous devons évaluer ce qui a changé et l'impact de ce changement. En ce qui concerne l'avenir, nous entreprendrons un examen approfondi d'OSSTF/FEESO et, pour bien y arriver, nous devons également être prêts à réfléchir à nos structures, à nos politiques et à nos priorités sur une base continue.

Un examen régulier de notre travail et de son efficacité à aborder le racisme systémique est de la plus

haute importance pour orienter ce travail dans la bonne voie. Il est essentiel dans nos efforts que nous soyons redevables à nos membres en évaluant la mesure à laquelle nous répondons suffisamment à notre engagement de contrer et d'aborder l'oppression. L'élimination des obstacles à la

participation des membres nécessitera une dose de courage pour celles et ceux dans des postes de direction qui seront appelés à faire face à leurs propres idées préconçues et à reconnaître les privilèges auxquels certaines et certains d'entre nous avons tiré parti.

Les expériences et la rétroaction récentes des membres ont mené à certaines démarches initiales entreprises par OSSTF/FEESO, y compris :

- Un examen de notre Réunion annuelle de l'Assemblée provinciale (RAAP) et des recommandations pour aborder les pratiques, politiques et procédures qui favorisent l'oppression et le racisme au sein de notre organisme;
- Une formation du personnel du Bureau provincial et de l'Exécutif provincial;
- Un plus grand nombre de membres au Groupe de travail consultatif en matière d'égalité;
- La création d'ateliers et de ressources sur Comment aborder le racisme anti-noir, Comment être un bon allié, l'Histoire des Noirs et l'Histoire des femmes;
- L'adoption par le Conseil provincial (en septembre) d'un certain nombre de résolutions, y compris la création de caucus en matière d'égalité à toutes les réunions provinciales et conférences d'OSSTF/FEESO et d'un groupe consultatif des personnes noires et les personnes de couleur.

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• **Une formation du personnel du Bureau provincial et de l'Exécutif provincial;**

• **Un examen de notre Réunion annuelle de l'Assemblée provinciale (RAAP) et des recommandations pour aborder les pratiques, politiques et procédures qui favorisent l'oppression et le racisme au sein de notre organisme;**

• **Un plus grand nombre de membres au Groupe de travail consultatif en matière d'égalité;**

• **La création d'ateliers et de ressources sur Comment aborder le racisme anti-noir, Comment être un bon allié, l'Histoire des Noirs et l'Histoire des femmes;**

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LE GROUPE DE TRAVAIL CONSULTATIF DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS, 2016



le sondage indiqué démontrait que les membres des groupes à la recherche d'égalité commencent à participer dans une plus grande mesure que par le passé

LE SONDAGE SUR LA PARTICIPATION DES MEMBRES, 2016



la convention de 2016 ont également dirigé leur syndicat à élaborer un programme intensif formel de mentorat conçu pour appuyer les membres de groupes à la recherche d'égalité qui désirent participer davantage à la direction

PROGRAMME DE MENTORAT, 2016



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OSSTF/FEESO s'engage à être un syndicat qui est principalement guidé par les approches anti-oppressives à la prise de décisions. Afin que cette transformation puisse avoir lieu, nous devons avoir la conviction institutionnelle d'étudier les priorités, les structures et les règles d'OSSTF/FEESO et surtout comment il se fait que des groupes de membres n'aient pas eu accès égal aux occasions de direction au sein de leur syndicat. Nous ne pouvons pas toujours faire ceci seul de notre côté, strictement au niveau de l'Exécutif provincial. Ce changement doit être apporté ensemble avec la participation de tous les membres. À mesure que nous avançons, même en ayant les meilleures intentions, il se peut que nous fassions des erreurs et de fausses manœuvres dans notre approche et (ou) nos efforts d'aborder le colonialisme, le racisme anti-noir, le racisme et les autres formes de discrimination. Lorsque cela se produira, nous devons également nous fier sur la rétroaction critique et être ouverts à envisager de nouvelles idées. Ensemble, à titre d'organisme comptant plus de 60 000 membres et représentant des centaines de classifications d'emploi différentes dans des communautés petites et grandes, nous devons cerner où le racisme et le préjugé systémiques existent et sont normalisés au sein de notre syndicat.

OSSTF/FEESO assume également et activement la responsabilité pour ce travail dans le cadre de la tâche plus large du mouvement syndical de cerner et d'aborder les façons auxquelles les structures coloniales canadiennes ont limité et continuent de limiter les occasions pour les travailleuses et travailleurs noirs, autochtones et de couleur d'assumer des rôles de direction au sein du mouvement syndical. En collaboration avec la Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants, la Ontario Teachers Federation, le Congrès du travail du Canada, La Fédération du travail de l'Ontario et d'autres partenaires

syndicaux et communautaires, nous devons faire partie d'une plus grande force politique qui entreprend des approches anti-oppressives dans tout ce que nous faisons. Cela comprend aider à élire un gouvernement qui croit en la justice sociale, en l'égalité et en l'inclusion. Cela signifie qu'il faut faire de l'égalité un enjeu électoral et utiliser nos compétences en matière d'activisme politique pour façonner l'optique politique des prochaines élections. Au cours des prochains mois, le travail de préparation en vue de l'élection sera, en partie, axé sur les efforts pour favoriser une société qui met ouvertement en question ses systèmes historiques d'oppression. Nous devons agir comme force syndicale unie pour aider à élire des candidates et des candidats au gouvernement qui souscrivent à des principes fondés sur l'équité et la justice sociale.

Ultimement, nous devons accepter le travail nécessaire qui nous attend. Nous devons devenir les champions de nouvelles façons de penser. Nous devons mettre en place les changements requis pour aborder et éliminer la discrimination anti-noir, anti-autochtone, raciale et sous toute autre forme au sein d'OSSTF/FEESO et de nos communautés.

Comme organisme, nous tirerons tous les bienfaits de ce travail et nous en ressortirons tous plus forts à titre de l'ensemble des membres.

L'Exécutif provincial est responsable des opérations quotidiennes de la Fédération et surveille les activités du Conseil provincial. L'Exécutif provincial relève des membres par le biais du Conseil provincial.

Les membres actuels comprennent : Harvey Bischof, président; Paul Caccamo, vice-président; Karen Littlewood, vice-présidente; Earl Burt, trésorier; Martha Hradowy, agente de l'Exécutif; Malini Leahy, agente de l'Exécutif et Dave Warda, agent de l'Exécutif.

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USING TRANSPARENCY AND FACTS TO COUNTER FORD'S DISHONEST NARRATIVE

By Brad Bennett, Tracey Germa, and Chris Samuel



A BRIEF HISTORY AND DEFINITION OF TRANSPARENT BARGAINING

Transparent or “open” collective bargaining is a process in which the normal rules of confidentiality are set aside in favour of openly and publicly disclosing bargaining positions and developments. This model is relatively uncommon although not unheard of in North America. In the vast majority of circumstances, and always within education bargaining in Ontario, collective bargaining has taken place in the traditional format—behind closed doors with an agreed to level of confidentiality. The philosophy behind this traditional approach is that it is meant to provide an opportunity for free flowing conversation and problem solving between the parties. However, in order to be successful, there must be a degree of trust and honesty between the parties and there must be confidence that both parties are actually looking for a solution. Neither of these conditions existed with the Ford government in the most recent round of bargaining.

Where open bargaining has been used in other jurisdictions and sectors, it has normally been agreed to by both sides of the table. That was not the case during the 2019/2020 round of bargaining. The switch to transparent bargaining last year was decided by and carried out unilaterally by OSSTF/FEESO.

MIN. OF EDUCATION AND CTA SUPPORT STAFF BRIEF

The government continues to use misleading facts to take positions that will cause long-lasting damage to public education in Ontario. Click Read More to see their brief and the OSSTF refutation of their rationale.

[READ MORE »](#)

October 1, 2019 11:59 am

OCTOBER 9/10 UPDATE

After 2 days of bargaining, minimal progress has been made.

[READ MORE »](#)

October 11, 2019 7:58 am

CONCILIATION

Due to the minimal progress and unwillingness of the other side to discuss any of the significant issues, OSSTF/FEESO has applied for Conciliation as the next step in the bargaining process.

[READ MORE »](#)

October 18, 2019 6:04 pm

OCTOBER 24 UPDATE

Today was a major step backward on progressing toward a negotiated settlement.

[READ MORE »](#)

October 24, 2019 7:45 pm

OCTOBER 25 UPDATE

OSSTF approached bargaining today in hopes of addressing significant issues. The management team continues to focus their efforts on topics related to certification and scheduling as opposed to the matters that are critical to Ontario students and families.

[READ MORE »](#)

October 26, 2019 8:26 am

OCTOBER 31 AND NOVEMBER 1

OSSTF is becoming increasingly frustrated with the fact that despite the Minister of Education's repeated public statements that he is looking for a deal, the government refused to bring amended proposals on significant issues to the table. OSSTF had proposed to bring our EW and T/OT Benefit plans together for increased sustainability and efficiencies, but the response has been to restrict and constrain the Benefit Trust's operations. OSSTF also identified a number of items that have the potential to generate cost savings and await a response.

[READ MORE »](#)

November 2, 2019 12:17 am

NOVEMBER 14 UPDATE

Today was unfortunately another unproductive day. OSSTF had proposed discussions regarding potential financial savings, but instead of receiving financial data to support those discussions we were faced with editorialized comments which seemed to assume our intent for such discussions.

[READ MORE »](#)

November 15, 2019 2:41 pm

NOVEMBER 18 AND 19

Bargaining was planned for two full days, however, the Minister's press conference delayed bargaining first thing Monday morning. We are prepared to bargain, but a total of 29 minutes over two days is not helpful.

[READ MORE »](#)

November 20, 2019 10:22 am

NOVEMBER 28

A total of 11 minutes at the bargaining table, no response from the management side, and more misleading statements by Minister Lecce

[READ MORE »](#)

November 29, 2019 5:35 am

NOVEMBER 30

We continue to be committed to a transparent process. Small group discussions were held today as well.

[READ MORE »](#)

December 1, 2019 11:47 am

DECEMBER 2

Limited small group discussions continued with little to no success.

[READ MORE »](#)

December 3, 2019 11:06 pm

DECEMBER 16 UPDATE

Even with the appointment of a new mediator no progress was made. The mediator has cancelled Tuesday's bargaining

[READ MORE »](#)

December 17, 2019 8:50 am

SUPPORT STAFF NEGOTIATING BRIEF

This brief contains the Support Staff Central Agreement with OSSTF/FEESO's proposed changes highlighted.

[READ MORE »](#)

October 3, 2019 8:59 am

TEACHER/OCCASIONAL TEACHER NEGOTIATING BRIEF

This brief contains the Teacher/Occasional Teacher Central Agreement with OSSTF/FEESO's proposed changes highlighted.

[READ MORE »](#)

October 1, 2019 9:09 am

OSSTF/FEESO'S PROPOSAL TO MOVE NEGOTIATIONS FORWARD

In response to the Minister of Education's repeated public requests for private mediation and postponement of further job action, OSSTF/FEESO has proposed a compromise in an effort to move negotiations forward.

[READ MORE »](#)

December 6, 2019 11:18 pm

OSSTF/FEESO'S RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT REFUSAL

OSSTF/FEESO has simply requested that the Government reset negotiations to where they should have started; that is, status quo to the expired collective agreement. The Government has refused. See OSSTF's response.

[READ MORE »](#)

December 9, 2019 9:41 pm

OSSTF'S PROPOSAL TO DELAY THE JANUARY 8 STRIKE

OSSTF's proposal demonstrates that salary and wages are not the major issue at the table as continually claimed by the Minister of Education.

[READ MORE »](#)

January 3, 2020 5:37 pm

MARCH 1-3 UPDATE

OSSTF/FEESO has not been to the bargaining table since December 16. The mediator called the parties together for informal exploratory talks on March 1. These talks continued until March 3 when they ended without moving to formal bargaining. Contrary to the statement on the attached proposals that they had been previously discussed, OSSTF/FEESO received them for the first time as attachments to an email sent approximately 3 hours after the completion of the exploratory talks.

[READ MORE »](#)

» THE CHOICE TO USE TRANSPARENT BARGAINING AND ITS IMPACT

On March 15, 2019, the Ford government without advance notice or conversation, announced devastating changes to education in Ontario. These changes included funding restrictions generally and hit secondary education particularly hard through a change in the funding for average class size from 22:1 to 28:1. This, coupled with the introduction of four mandatory e-learning courses with an average class size of 35:1 would ultimately lead to a loss of approximately 25 per cent of all secondary school teachers over a four-year period. As school boards began to create plans to implement the changes in funding, in addition to the loss of teachers, many other education worker positions were also being eliminated due to financial pressures created by the government's announcements. This problem would only get worse in the following years.

Once it was clear that the Ford government's agenda was to deliver a crippling blow to public education in order to extract hundreds of millions of dollars, and based on the complete lack of consultation, discussion or honesty, we knew that something bold and different was required in response. It was determined that laying bare the proposals from both sides would be the most effective way to demonstrate to the public that the Federation was, in fact, seeking only inflationary adjustments to salary and benefits and was focused primarily on safeguarding supports for students and programming by protecting staffing levels and funding. This clearly countered the government's dishonest narrative that it was all about excessive compensation demands from "greedy unions."

Although extremely disappointing and regrettable, it was also clear from the outset that the school boards associations, and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) in particular, would not stand up to the government in defense of publicly-funded education. This left the responsibility with teachers and education workers to take on the fight. In the end, we decided to advocate through collective bargaining in a very public and transparent way. This move involved a tremendous amount of preparation in advance in order to be effectively launched and implemented.

Throughout the collective bargaining process, all official proposals and counter-proposals were posted for members and the broader public to view. In addition, a summary of what had happened during each bargaining session was posted for all to see. The government and school board associations attempted to blunt this strategy by embedding political spin and rhetoric into their bargaining proposals, but those tactics proved entirely ineffective as their self-serving statements received very little attention from either the public or the media.

The decision to move to transparent bargaining had two goals. First, transparent bargaining has the potential for democratizing the bargaining process somewhat by allowing members a closer look at what is happening. The hope is that by choosing transparency, unions build a closer relationship with their members. Second, transparent bargaining has strategic potential. By forcing key issues to be dealt with in public, it forces the employer to defend its efforts to gain cuts and concessions.

Over the next year, OSSTF/FEESO will be taking a close look at whether transparent bargaining succeeded in terms of increasing member mobilization and the extent to which it supported a successful bargaining strategy. This work is not yet completed, but some insights may be available from the Minister of Education Stephen Lecce's comments about OSSTF/FEESO's transparent bargaining strategy.

Between October 2019 and March 2020, the Minister held eight media availabilities at Queen's Park. On six of those eight occasions, he referred directly to OSSTF/FEESO's decision to post substantive proposals to the Bargaining for Education website (bargainingforeducation.ca). Although the Minister referred to transparent bargaining much less often than online learning, class size, and other major issues, he did reference it more than all-day kindergarten, investments in mental health spending, his concern for vulnerable families, or the supposedly 'cyclical' nature of education unions' labour disruptions. When he talked about OSSTF/FEESO's transparent bargaining strategy, he did it in one of two ways: to justify why he was commenting on a specific issue or to draw attention to OSSTF/FEESO's refusal

to make concessions on major issues.

Here are three examples of the first type of comment:

- "Since the beginning of this process, OSSTF has publicized their proposals and the government's. Given that reality, I'm here today before you to contextualize why we have made this move and what we're hoping to achieve from it and that's to keep children in class in the province of Ontario." (2019-10-24)
- "I'm providing this because, to be frank, and I say this respectfully, I never really wanted to be in front of you disclosing this number because.... I say this in the sense that we opt, we, governments of all parties opt, negotiate at the table. OSSTF has made a determination to publicize this. And so I'm providing you with the high level details because I think it's a public interest argument that you should know what we tabled, given that it will be released ostensibly in short order." (2019-10-24)
- "We table them, they get posted, so therefore, it's my duty to communicate it with my voice, not through the unions..." (2019-12-10)

From a political communications perspective, this is a win. It indicates that the Minister was pulled away from his key messaging and that, even better, he was forced to discuss issues he would otherwise have preferred to avoid. Moreover, it may have driven at least some reporters and listeners to bargainingforeducation.ca, where they would have been exposed to research and other communications pieces in support of OSSTF/FEESO's positions. It also may have helped cement perception of OSSTF/FEESO as committed to evidence and openness.

As a communicator, Minister Lecce loves to draw contrasts. As bargaining proceeded, one of his go-to rhetorical devices was to claim that the government was bargaining in good faith as evidenced by having made "major moves" on key issues. In fact, he made a claim of this sort in each of the eight media availabilities he held at Queen's Park over this period. In several instances, he tried to contrast the government's 'reasonableness' with OSSTF/FEESO's refusal to make concessions. Here are some more examples.

- "Now again, the benefit we have of this process is that you're able to check the OSSTF website, which categorically has seen not a singular example of a move by the union. Not one." (2019-11-28)
- "Their website tells a story. Not one substantive move." (2019-12-06)
- "In the context of OSSTF, which at least, is publicized, you can see it for yourself. There has been not a material, substantive change since they tabled their only proposal, in the beginning of late summer-early fall." (2020-01-15)

As our review of the bargaining strategy continues, this refusal to make concessions will be examined more closely. Public opinion polling data from the period before COVID-19 started throwing a wrench in bargaining and education alike showed that most parents thought we were on the right track with our demands. Most observers supported OSSTF/FEESO's position on online learning and class size in particular. In that context, having the Minister reinforce our position while again sending people to one of our communications hubs would likely have supported the overall strategy.

BARGAININGFOREducation.CA

» COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES AND THE GROWTH OF PUBLIC SUPPORT

The goal from the outset of the *No Cuts to Education* and *Here for Students* campaigns was to foster greater support for our bargaining positions and to situate this support in the context of our goal to improve education in Ontario. It was a simple message that cuts would lead to a deterioration of the quality of education in the publicly-funded system. Coupled with that was an attempt to demonstrate the underlying desire of the Conservative government to move towards a model of private education.

Because transparent bargaining allowed members and the public to know what our values are and how they manifested themselves in our bargaining asks, communicating to members meant making clear parallels between our asks and the government's strips. The juxtaposition of our "no cuts" to the government's ongoing reductions in funding for the system made for clear messaging that the public could grasp. For the first time, OSSTF/FEESO made social media a leading element in our communications strategy during bargaining. Graphics, animations, print media ads, video segments, member interviews, and picket leaflets were all effectively able to reference OSSTF/FEESO's real positions at the bargaining table.

With over 100 different graphics and animations produced between the March 2019 Conservative announcement of its drastic cuts to education and final ratification of the Central Agreement in May 2020, the communications approach delivered direct and accessible messaging to the public. These materials also gave members clear speaking points to use when engaging in one-on-one political action. The membership has never been given such a prominent role in the work of shaping the face of bargaining and public perception.

An additional communications ben-

APRIL 19 – TENTATIVE AGREEMENTS REACHED

April 19 – Tentative Agreements Reached With the assistance of a mediator, tentative agreements have been reached for both the OSSTF/FEESO Teacher-Occasional Teacher and Education Worker bargaining tables. Planning for the ratification process is currently underway.

[READ MORE »](#)

April 21, 2020 4:01 pm

efit of transparent bargaining was the increased visibility it brought to education workers in the province. Despite the government's slow move to referencing "education workers" and identifying their unique roles in the education system, OSSTF/FEESO messaging and public access to the education worker positions held by the union, led to a significantly increased awareness of the vital role education workers play in Ontario's education system.

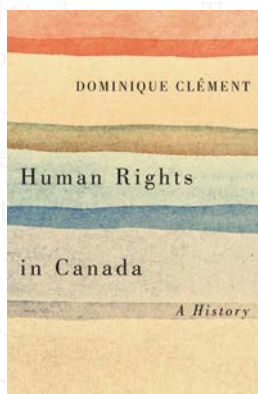
When the membership took to the picket lines across the province for 13 different strike actions and dozens of additional information pickets, they were equipped with the understanding of what OSSTF/FEESO was asking for. They had the tools to stand proudly and speak out against the cuts that Ford and Lecce continued to insist were good for students and good for learning. Images of members in parkas, facing extreme weather, wholly united kept public education in the forefront of the public eye. #NoCutsToEducation and #HereForStudents quickly became rallying cries heard across the province. "No Cuts to Education" as a central tag line not only unified the membership, it also unified an important grass-roots ally—parents, grandparents, caregivers, and students were all united in their support for Ontario's education workers and teachers. It was not uncommon for members of the public to ask members for one of their No Cuts buttons or bumper magnets—the branding and the message was simple and it worked for the public.

» RATIFYING IN A PANDEMIC

The onset of pandemic-necessitated shutdowns to much of the world in March 2020, almost a year after Ford's devastating cuts to education were announced, meant that the face of bargaining changed. Moving to virtual bargaining sessions and then through ratification information meetings and online voting was a twist that nobody could have foreseen. However, the ratification of provincial collective agreements for both the education worker and teacher/occasional teacher tables was achieved in May of 2020. As we continue to work towards local Bargaining Unit collective agreements across the province, OSSTF/FEESO is confident that the use of transparent bargaining had a significant impact on the outcome of negotiations. Whether or not this tactic is used by other labour organizations in the future is still to be seen, but what is known is that the membership and their belief in this unique approach to bargaining had a significant impact on our success and on public understanding of what is meant when we say that OSSTF/FEESO is committed to protecting and enhancing public education.

Brad Bennett is the Associate General Secretary overseeing the Protective Services Division; **Tracey Germa** is an Executive Assistant in the Communications/Political Action Department and **Chris Samuel** is the Public Policy Analyst, all working at OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office.

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2020-21 a little...Overwhelming?



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the 5 essential elements of parent solidarity

By Seth Bernstein and Muna Kadri

Over the past two years we have seen a surge in parents organizing in their communities and mobilizing to advocate for public education. Parents were alarmed when, in March of 2019, the Ford government announced cuts and changes to public education that they knew would be harmful to kids, including increased class sizes, loss of the Local Priorities Fund, and the mandating of four e-learning course for students.

Parents do not have an embedded organizing structure the way workers do with their unions. Typically, parents might get involved with the local School Council or with the Board, and/or they might be community activists. Prior to the latest crisis, aside from some great pockets of activism from organizations like Fix Our Schools, there had not been any larger-scale social movement of mobilizing parents since the days of Mike Harris.

That changed just before the March announcement as activist parents anticipated the upcoming cuts, and started organizing in different spaces—some online, some in their neighbourhoods.

Those working in education and parents are natural allies. Many education workers and teachers are parents. And we share the same core goals—we want kids to be happy, successful, and have the tools to make the change they want to see in the world. Power brokers rely on creating artificial wedges to reduce community opposition to cuts. For this reason, it is of critical importance for education workers and teachers to authentically connect with, and support, public education parent activism.

Artwork: Ronda Allan

Let's take a look at steps those of us working in education can take to support parent organizing:

1. Centre on equity

It is essential that parents feel that their experiences are being reflected in the fight for public education. Fighting back against cuts, or fighting for a fully-funded public education system should always be centered in equity. Particular attention should be paid to listening to communities and ensuring that racialized and low income communities are part of the advocacy work to

make sure their concerns are reflected in the organizing.

This is where mobilizing and empowering our own membership can be a powerful tool and why diverse representation within our union structures is so important. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) education workers and teachers often experience the structural oppressions that our

BIPOC students and parents do, and these individuals are also connected to community. Campaigns for fully-funded public education should be paired with demands that reflect community calls for justice and equity; these demands might include decolonizing curriculum, addressing white supremacy, ending anti-Black racism, and calling for housing and food security.

2. Be clear

Launching the most recent organizing efforts was done with the belief that if parents fully understood the impact of Ford's decisions then they would naturally be motivated to act in support of publicly-funded education. Education policy is overly complicated as it is, and the Ford government went out of its

way to use smoke and mirrors to further confuse the public. Education workers, teachers, and their unions have an important role to play in clearly communicating critical information at any time, but especially in times of crisis.

It is always wise to craft public communications from the perspective that

your audience is not completely familiar with the topic you are presenting. Take big issues, zoom into their finer details and contextualize the issue from a local perspective to make them meaningful for those in your community.

3. Meet them where they are

Political action means very different things for different people. It is important to value all types of political action and not to create a hierarchy that makes people feel as if their contributions are inadequate. For example, in the summer

of 2020, when the education community and parents joined together to create the Safe September campaign, actions ranged from sending a tweet to physically taping up a sign at a local MPP's office. Space was created for each type of

engagement in a focused way so that everyone's contributions felt valued. This scaffolded engagement strategy also motivates some people to try a new tactic after feeling they have effectively mastered their preferred method.

4. Break the silo

In elementary schools, education workers, teachers, and parents tend to be more closely connected by virtue of the younger age of students and the connection to the single classroom teacher. In secondary schools, establishing a connection can be more difficult. In years when there is not a lot of political strife, communications typically take place via report cards, student support team tables, occasional phone calls home, OSSTF/FEESO representatives at School Council meetings,

and parent-teacher interviews that pull in a small percentage of parents. It is typically the principal that communicates school-wide issues to parents. In times of labour strife, when Boards shut off communication pathways, it can be even harder to establish an authentic connection. And of course, the government does its best to command the airwaves.

Consider creative connection set-ups to break up the siloing & division that serves the interests of power and com-

promises community solidarity. Reach out to School Council Chairs about establishing a non-Board mail list for communications to parents about labour issues. Regular messages can provide updates that cut through messaging spin and offer the opportunity for solidarity initiatives like the school walk-ins in the No Cuts to Education fight. Consider running a town hall that affords a forum for education workers, teachers, and parents to come together and talk through issues.

5. Show up for them

Relationships are about reciprocity, so if you are hoping that community members will engage in your campaigns, make sure you are actively engaging in other local community issues. Actively monitoring education issues is important but it is vital to also regularly scan social media to see what other types of organizing is happening.

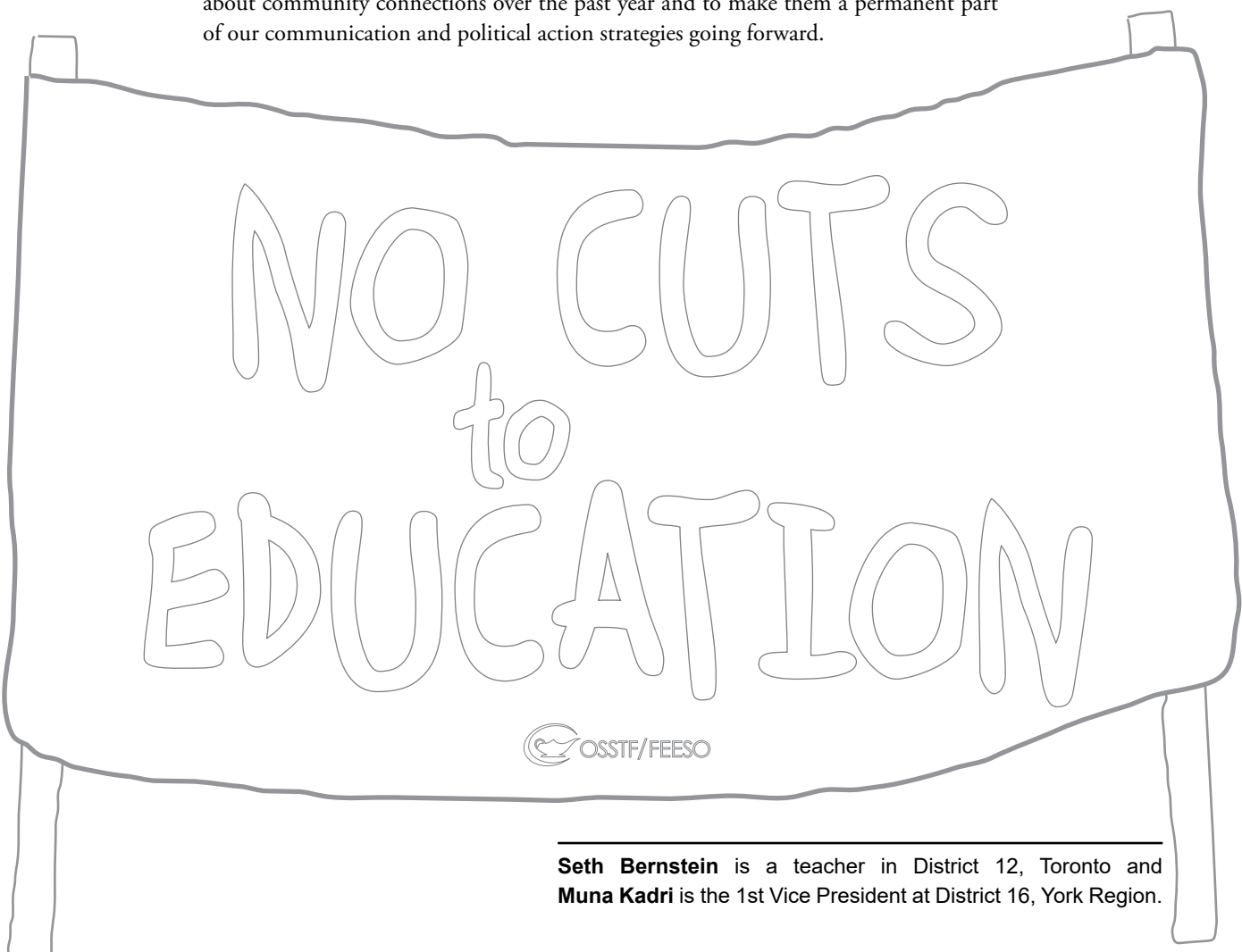
It is greatly appreciated by other community organizers when we actively reach out to those organizing around other causes and offer support in whatever ways we can.

Support could be as simple as sharing information on social media, offering posters, and markers, or even attending a rally. All of these small, simple actions

build community relationships that can prove vital when we need parents to show support for solidarity initiatives like going outside a hotel where bargaining is happening. They also help grow genuine contact lists for when the media needs to interview community members about parent perspectives in labour disputes.

Conclusion:

The work that we in education can do to engage with parents will make our campaigns to protect our schools stronger because it will serve to unite the public and can allow us to promote the work we do as a Federation. The solidarity initiatives that took place during the No Cuts to Education fight had a significant impact on mitigating some of Ford's intended cuts. We have an opportunity to take the lessons we learned about community connections over the past year and to make them a permanent part of our communication and political action strategies going forward.



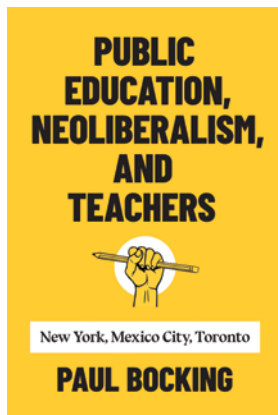
NO CUTS
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Seth Bernstein is a teacher in District 12, Toronto and
Muna Kadri is the 1st Vice President at District 16, York Region.

Top picks

Reviews



Public Education, Neoliberalism, and Teachers: New York, Mexico City, Toronto

by **Paul Bocking**

University of Toronto Press

(May 16 2020)

316 pages, Paperback \$22.95; Kindle \$14.95; Ebook \$14.99

Reviewed by Pawel Mazurek

While working on this book review, I struggled with the term “neoliberalism.” I asked a few friends and colleagues how they would define it and I got very diverse answers. When I asked them about the impact of neoliberalism on education, I mostly heard silence. The fact that we are unable to describe an amorphous concept that is arguably affecting every moment of our social interactions is terrifying. But it also shows why Paul Bocking’s book is an important and timely contribution designed not only for academics studying the field of education, but also for teachers, education workers, and those interested in exploring the impact of neoliberalism beyond the classroom.

Bocking, an occasional teacher from District 12, Toronto and a sessional lecturer in geography and sociology at the University of Toronto and Trent University, explains the impact of neo-

liberalism on public education by examining attacks on teachers’ professional autonomy in three metropolitan areas: New York, Mexico City, and Toronto. Despite being personally invested in the subject of his study, the author acknowledges his professional and personal biases and provides a well-documented and objective comparative analysis of the topic. Using a five-pronged approach, he examines each case study by looking at changes in governance models, shifts of power in relationships between teachers and principals, impact of standardized testing, competition for the budget, and responses by the unions.

A key strength of the book is its accessibility. Although the author dissects complex concepts and layers of intertwined social dimensions, through his clear structure and ability to explain and provide ample evidence supported by interviews with teachers and union activists, the fruit of his work is still accessible to those outside of the realm of education. Because the book contains all evidence to form an informed position on the subject, it makes for a great gift for fellow education workers, activists, family members, and friends who might not understand why unions oppose the limits on professional judgment so vigorously.

Pawel Mazurek is a member of the District 35, Universities support staff Bargaining Unit, employed by the Université Saint-Paul.

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Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present

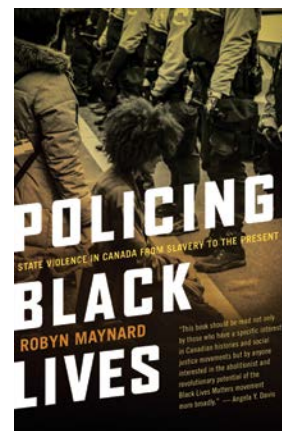
by **Robyn Maynard**

Fernwood Publishing (Oct. 2017)

292 pages, Paperback \$24.75; Kindle \$24.99

Reviewed by Diane Ballantyne

Robyn Maynard’s *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* is a searing, expansive compendium analyzing Canadian institutions and how they perpetuate white supremacy through the oppressive force of



systemic racism. And for white people, in particular, sometimes those truths are hard to hear, so let’s get uncomfortable.

Covering pre-Confederation slavery, Racial Capitalism, Law Enforcement, Mysogynoir, Social Services, and Education, the table of contents alone demonstrates the reader is in for a deluge of truths.

Maynard has organized her book so you can ‘begin at the beginning,’ as it were, or take on each chapter and topic independently. Either way, the reader will come away equipped with new information and a better understanding of the gross injustices in our society. This is not meant to paralyze: it is to help bring issues into clearer focus with the hope that knowledge brings action for change.

Maynard outlines pre-Confederation slavery in Canada and further illustrates how the *Multiculturalism Act* of 1971 did little to address inequality for Black Canadians. She illustrates, through copious examples, how, “Anti-Blackness in Canada often goes unspoken” (pg. 3). Further connections are made between anti-Blackness as part of, “the reality that Canada is a settler colony founded on colonization and genocide.” (pg. 11) and the Indigenous experience since colonization.

As an educator, I honed in on chapter “The (Mis)Education of Black Youth.” As a middle class, middle-aged white woman, I cannot ignore that I have been afforded great privilege. Privilege is one of those things, when you have it, you really do not see unless you undertake significant learning to become more self-aware. This book is an important invest-

ment to unlearn so much of what has been intentionally hidden or ignorantly ignored by many.

Maynard pulls no punches when outlining how, “Black youth are so often not seen or treated as children, schools too often become their first encounter with the organized and systemic devaluation of Blackness present in society at large” (pg. 209). While expectations within the system are deeply problematic, Black youth have consistently identified how their teachers’ low expectations of them impacts their lack of engagement. She shares the ongoing evidence of Black students being steered away from the academic streams and that, “only 54% of Black youth reported that they felt supported by teachers” (pg. 215). Black students treated as a threat within the walls of the school is equally troubling.

Maynard further outlines how, “schools have become an increasingly carceral experience for Black, Indigenous, and other racialized students, in terms of both the general environment and disciplinary practice” (pg. 218). To illustrate this statement, between the 2011/12 and 2015/16 school years almost half of the students expelled from the Toronto District School Board were Black whereas only 10% expelled were white (pg. 218).

There are ongoing moves to remove School Resource Officer (SRO) programs from boards across the province. Toronto cancelled its SRO program in 2017, and more boards are discussion cancelling their programs. However, there is a misunderstanding by some trustees of the deep and scarring impacts the SRO program can have on Black, Indigenous, and other racialized learners. Furthermore, an often overlooked and crucial thread that Maynard expertly weaves through her book is the impact of our history and policies on Black women and girls.

While many might consider the facts, “too depressing” as a society that seems to continually seek amusement and escape, Maynard ends her book with a hopeful tone. She reminds us that reforms do not challenge underlying systemic racism and, “without a trans-

formation of the existing political conditions...meaningful justice is unlikely to manifest itself” (pg. 231). She concludes with the fact that, “radical changes may be necessary to achieve racial and economic justice should not deter us from believing that we can, and should, work toward a society that deprioritizes, disinvests and dismantles institutions that mandate the violent subordination of our most vulnerable” (pg. 234).

Anti-racism work demands becoming comfortable with being uncomfortable. As Canadians, Ontarians, and education workers, we must confront our own history in order to reshape a fairer future for everyone. This book is a valuable resource in helping to accept what may often be uncomfortable truths in order to achieve that goal.

Diane Ballantyne, M.Ed is a teacher at Centre Wellington District High School in Fergus in District 18, Upper Grand and sits on the Ontario College of Teachers as a Council Member.

• • •

The Reconciliation Manifesto: Recovering the Land, Rebuilding the Economy

by Arthur Manuel (Author), Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson (Author), Naomi Klein (Preface)

Lorimer (Oct. 6 2017)

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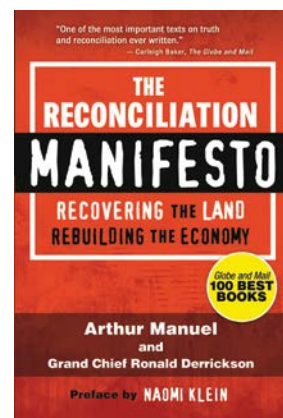
Reviewed by Gary Fenn

Arthur Manuel, a widely respected Indigenous leader and activist from the Secwepemc Nation, co-authored *The Reconciliation Manifesto* with Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. Manual and Derrickson succinctly layout the problems associated with Canada’s current approach to reconciliation in Canada. Put simply, the authors posit that any attempts at reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples requires dismantling the colonial structures that control the relationship.

The authors celebrate the importance of grassroots movements who support

Indigenous rights, including *Idle No More* and land defender groups, as they best represent the voice of Indigenous peoples. At the same time, Manual and Derrickson harshly criticize government-funded Indigenous organizations, including the Assembly of First Nations, as they are fed by the colonial machine and have had a minimal impact on influencing the political agenda.

Arthur Manual demonstrates his profound knowledge of international law and relations through his experiences



of speaking at the United Nations and with other foreign diplomats. He cites the federal government’s claim that it has implemented the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as disingenuous, as the government has disregarded much of that document’s true substance.

While the subject matter may appear at first glance to be heavy and disheartening, the authors express their views in a concise and simple way. Their points are articulately thought provoking and they do not shy away from the issues in any way. Their writing is a reminder that reconciliation work must embrace approaches that foster a repair of the harms done and a reconstruction of all future relationships.

Sadly, soon after the completion of this book, Arthur Manual passed away on January 11, 2017.

Gary Fenn is Director of the Communications/Political Action Department at OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office.

Extraordinary efforts:

Taking care of others and ourselves



Writing at the beginning of October, it is impossible to know what conditions we will find ourselves in by the time this is published. We are currently in the midst of a very worrisome upward trend in COVID-19 case counts. At the same time, the Ontario Labour Relations Board has recently dismissed, on jurisdictional grounds, our appeal of the Ford government's inadequate reopening plans. That will not stop our fight for safe working and learning conditions but it is disconcerting that a government that claimed it wanted to hear from experts found a way to shut down expert testimony before it was even presented.

In the meantime, the Premier alternately ignores and then tries to pick unnecessary fights with education unions, including and perhaps primarily with OSSTF/FEESO. Elsewhere in the world, such as in Denmark, for example, those jurisdictions that have worked closely with education unions in creating reopening plans have been the most successful. In those places, educators had confidence in the plans and conveyed that confidence to parents and students. No such confidence is felt in Ontario, as the number of students learning remotely attests.

We remain primarily concerned, of course, about member health and safety as it relates to the pandemic. Included in that, though, is concern for member well-being in a broader way. We've been hearing increasingly about members who are overworked, stressed, and approaching burn-out. I know that this is not confined to Ontario. In speaking with my counterparts from education

unions across the country, I have repeatedly heard the same story. Educating and supporting students through this pandemic is nothing like your usual work and educators are frequently called on to, essentially, double their usual tasks as many deal with students both face-to-face and remotely. At the same time, OSSTF/FEESO local leaders should be recognized for making extraordinary efforts to support members.

Anyone who knows anything about Ontario's publicly-funded education system and those who work within it will be unsurprised that educators are dedicating so much effort to their students. You didn't need the Premier to tell you to "step up" when you've been stepping up for years, going to great lengths to overcome inadequate resources and still providing one of the best educations anywhere in the world. You deserve to be thanked and congratulated for your efforts and certainly we've heard from grateful parents who are doing exactly that.

As you persevere through these difficult times, I urge you to also give appropriate thought to your own ongoing well-being. To be at your best, you also need to take care of yourself. Draw whatever boxes you can around your professional life and set aside some time for loved ones and things that bring you joy and relaxation. Not only your students but your families and all those who care about you want you to be standing and hopefully thriving in the coming months.

Harvey Bischof,
OSSTF/FEESO President

Des efforts extraordinaires :

Prendre de soin des autres et de soi

En écrivant ceci au début d'octobre, il m'est impossible de connaître les conditions dans lesquelles nous nous trouverons au moment de la publication du présent texte. Nous nous trouvons présentement au milieu d'une inquiétante tendance à la hausse du nombre de cas de COVID-19. En même temps, la Commission des relations de travail de l'Ontario a récemment rejeter, pour cause de compétence juridictionnelle, notre appel à l'endroit du plan de réouverture inadéquat du gouvernement Ford. Cela ne mettra pas fin à notre lutte en faveur de conditions de travail et d'apprentissage sécuritaires, mais il est déconcertant de voir qu'un gouvernement qui prétendait vouloir écouter les experts ait trouvé une façon de mettre un frein à leur témoignage, avant même qu'il ne soit présenté.

Dans l'intervalle, le premier ministre oscille entre ne pas tenir compte des syndicats en éducation et s'engager dans des disputes inutiles avec eux, y compris et possiblement surtout avec OSSTF/FEESO. Ailleurs dans le monde, comme au Danemark par exemple, ces administrations qui ont travaillé étroitement avec les syndicats en éducation à l'élaboration de plans de réouverture ont connu le plus de succès. À ces endroits, les éducatrices et éducateurs avaient confiance dans les plans et ont transmis cette confiance aux parents et élèves. Aucune telle confiance n'est ressentie en Ontario, comme en fait foi le nombre d'élèves inscrits à l'apprentissage à distance.

Nous demeurons surtout préoccupés, bien entendu, par la sécurité et la

santé de nos membres en ce qui concerne la pandémie. Ajoutons à ceci par contre notre préoccupation pour le bien-être des membres d'une optique plus générale. Nous entendons de plus en plus d'incidences de membres qui sont surchargés, stressés et qui frôlent l'épuisement professionnel. Je sais que cela ne se limite pas à l'Ontario. En parlant avec mes homologues des syndicats en éducation de partout dans le pays, j'ai entendu maintes fois le même récit. L'éducation et le soutien offerts aux élèves pendant cette pandémie ne ressemblent en rien à votre travail habituel et les éducatrices et éducateurs sont souvent appelés à essentiellement à en faire deux fois plus alors que bon nombre d'entre elles et eux traitent avec les élèves en personne et à distance. En même temps, les dirigeants locaux d'OSSTF/FEESO devraient être reconnus pour leurs efforts extraordinaires dans le soutien de leurs membres.

Toute personne qui connaît moins le système d'éducation financé à même les deniers publics en Ontario et ceux et celles qui y œuvrent ne sera aucunement surprise de constater que les éducatrices et éducateurs dévouent beaucoup d'efforts pour leurs élèves. Vous n'aviez pas besoin de vous faire dire par le premier ministre de « faire votre part » (*step up*) alors que vous faites amplement votre part depuis des années, vous donnant beaucoup de mal pour surmonter l'insuffisance de ressources et quand même parvenir à offrir une éducation parmi les meilleures au monde. Vous méritez des remerciements et des félicitations pour vos efforts et nous

avons certainement entendu les éloges de parents reconnaissants qui ne manquent pas de le souligner.

Alors que vous persévérez dans cette période difficile, je vous implore d'accorder une pensée tout aussi appropriée à votre propre bien-être continu. Afin d'être à son meilleur, il faut également prendre soin de soi. Essayez de tracer des limites autour de votre vie professionnelle et de réserver du temps pour vos êtres chers et ces choses qui vous apportent joie et détente. Non seulement vos élèves, mais également votre famille et toutes celles et tous ceux qui se soucient de vous tiennent à ce que vous puissiez vous tenir debout et, espérons-le, prospérer au cours des prochains mois.

Harvey Bischof,
président d'OSSTF/FEESO



DID YOU KNOW?

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MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH February 6: 9 am - 4 pm CT

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PLAY THERAPY—Tools for Helping Children and Youth February 17: 9 am - 4 pm CT

This interactive workshop focuses on how to use play therapy strategies to help children and youth positively cope and work through stressful life experiences.

ANXIETY—Practical Intervention Strategies February 18: 9 am - 4 pm CT

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Creative stimuli

A proven need during isolation



As I sit and write this article, it is hard to think of going on any outing, never mind a field trip.

As I cast my mind back to when I was in elementary and high school, a field trip was much anticipated. Getting away from the regular day-to-day environment was refreshing and hey, at the time it may have been lost on me, but I was even going to even learn something new.

The last couple of months has taught us that indefinite isolation can be very overwhelming, scary and unpredictable. However, it has never been so evident as now, that the arts can truly be a remarkable way of helping get through these times.

Online performances from musical

artists are available daily brought to us online streaming. From singer songwriters projecting from their living room through their mobile devices to a five-time Grammy Award nominee, Andrea Bocelli performing his Music For Hope concert at the Duomo di Milano. And to note, this performance was not only the biggest classical livestream event in the website's history, but also its biggest musical livestream of all time.

Local music venues also began at home viewing sessions. Toronto's Queen Street West *Rivoli*, for example, began "Rivoli Home Sessions" available through its Instagram page @rivolitoronto. Where different artists take over every day for live performances from their homes.

We saw the art world virtually opened its doors to the public, such as the AGO from Home. A new way to enjoy the museum from your home, bringing you into the building virtually through unique access to stories and experiences.

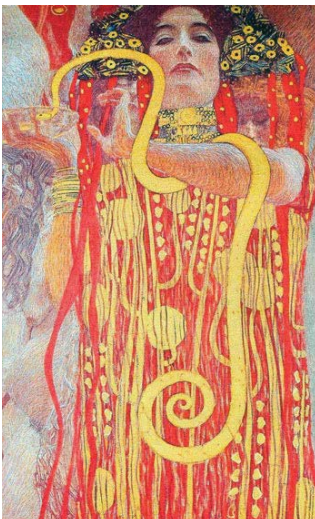
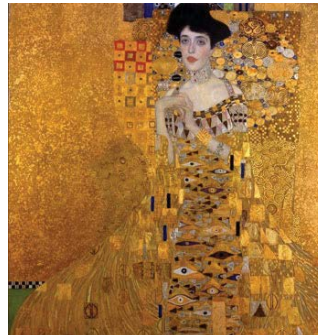
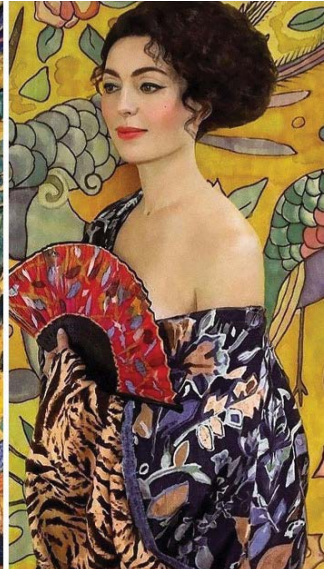
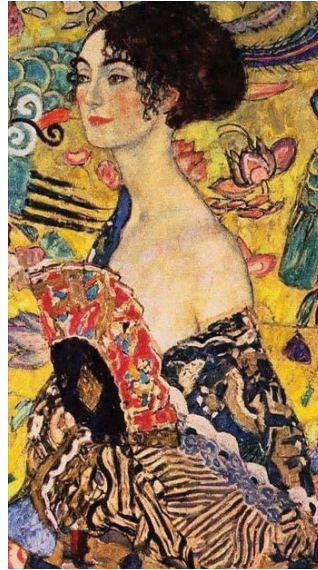
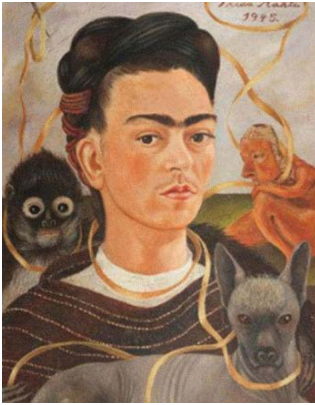
And what has appeared to be a lot of fun was a challenge made by Los Angeles-based Getty Museum that asked Twitter users to recreate their favourite artworks using items found at home.

Even the world of fashion has responded to the need of cultural stimuli. Dior has made its *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* exhibition available to view online. Originally held at Paris' Musée des Arts Décoratifs from 2017 to 2018, and the following year at the V&A in London, the blockbuster exhibition traces the evolution of the house of Dior from its advent in post-war Paris—where Christian Dior ushered in an era of elegance with his revolutionary 'New Look'.

Dior is providing a behind-the-scenes insight into the making of the exhibition, plus a virtual tour of its many rooms, via a captivating documentary available here www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLWDWzMrkBE&feature=youtu.be.

There is even something for the theatre lovers. The Stratford Festival launched a free Shakespeare film festival. Viewers can stream 12 of the Bard's plays through July. Each film will debut with a 7 p.m. remain available for free for a three-week period on the Stratford Festival website stratfordfestival.ca.





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in honour of Marion Drysdale

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—Jesse Jackson

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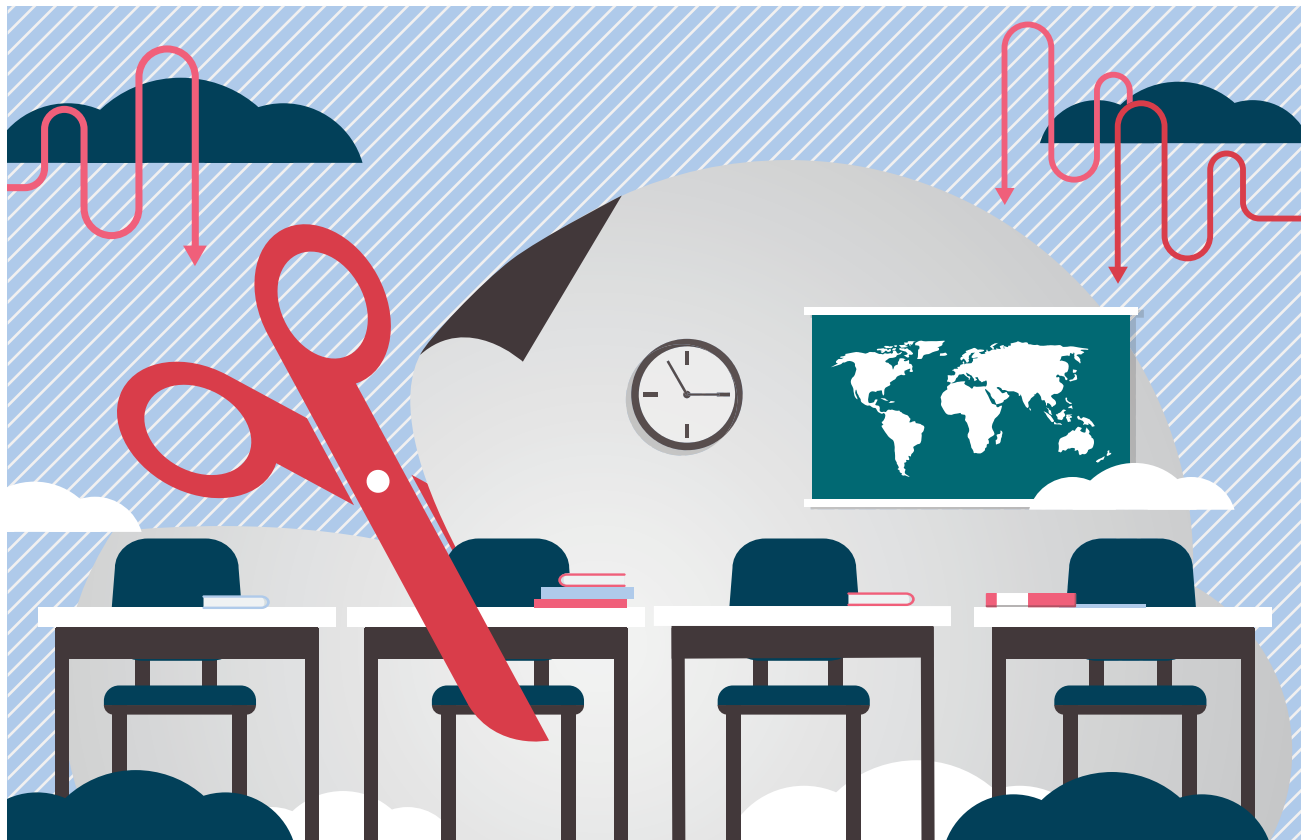
OPEN

FRIENDSHIP

ALLY

Familiarity breeds resistance

Harris-era parents know there's nothing innovative about Ontario's education cuts



I came of age as an activist and researcher when Mike Harris blustered his way into power in the 90s. His education minister, John Snobelen, famously a high school dropout, was much more comfortable referring to students as “clients,” parents as “customers” and teachers as “front line service providers,” and spoke approvingly about “creating a crisis” to justify overhauling the system.

And so we got labour unrest, gutted public infrastructure, and a funding formula that pulled over \$2 billion out of public education.

This resulted in a number of trends which have only grown more prevalent: an insufficient basis of funding or other resources to meet the needs of all kids, particularly students for whom English or French was not a first language, or kids with special needs. Increased normalization of private financing to inequitably address the shortfall through fundraising, user fees, corporate and commu-

nity handouts...which exacerbates the problem of how already-vulnerable communities are further marginalized. And continually deteriorating infrastructure, on top of a \$16 billion backlog.

When they were elected, the Liberals implemented some good policies: full-day kindergarten is a positive addition, though absent the wrap-around care, it proved less transformative than it could have been. An updated Health and Phys-ed curriculum update was also welcome (and though it became a political football in the provincial election, to a large extent the government reinstated it after cancelling it). And certainly the money the Liberals provided for various projects and top-ups was welcome, after years of deliberate and what seemed to be almost gleeful underfunding.

But the Liberals did not address the structural flaws of the funding formula, so a number of student needs still went unmet, and the systemic underfunding

continued...because things we consider to be a fundamental human right and a public good can't be provided through good will and temporary or quick-fix pockets of cash. They require codified policy, long term financial guarantees, and measures to ensure accountability.

So when a new government is elected, and further under-resources public education, limits services, and in their media comments tries to pit teachers, education workers and unions against parents and students, parents of a certain age—like me—find that this feels all too familiar.

Except now it's being done to our kids.

Currently we have a population increasingly disenfranchised, dealing with inequality and precarity which makes it even more difficult for people to build community and engage with each other, let alone be as involved in their kids' edu-

Artwork: Gabriela Rodriguez



cation as they would like. And because of overlapping vulnerabilities, this impacts some families and communities more than others. We also have the deliberate undermining of programs that exist to help mitigate this disengagement, or the money required to keep them operating in a dependable way.

To counter this disengagement, we need to ensure that we are talking with and listening to each other, because this is the only way we can advocate for well-funded, high quality, publicly accountable schools, where kids' needs are met, and where educators and education workers have the resources required to meet kids where they're at, and communicate effectively with parents and caregivers. This commitment to broad engagement is fundamental to pushing back against the cuts that will not serve any of us well, and will disproportionately hurt those who are already most marginalized and vulnerable.

So long as the current funding formula remains in place, schools and kids will continue to be under-resourced, even if the government of the day is less right-leaning. This is why we need to reject the argument that turning back the clock to just before this current round of cuts is good enough. It's not. And while I am deeply concerned about the direction of any funding formula review that this current government might undertake, we need to start thinking about not just protecting the schools we have now—which leave too many people out in the cold—but building a movement to advocate for the schools we need and that our kids deserve.

These days the government's rhetoric and policy direction is getting a rough ride. As a recent Environics poll makes clear, parents understand that larger

classes do not build resilience. All school boards are experiencing cuts in total operating funding, in per pupil funding, or both. Mandatory e-learning does not create more choice for students. A market-based service model is extremely detrimental for kids with autism. Limiting course options for kids is short-sighted and contradictory. In five years there will be 6,000 to 10,000 fewer teaching positions (depending on which government number we're using). The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) Ontario's Ricardo Tranjan mapped this to show what this means to communities across the province.

My partner—who I met during the Days of Action—and I have two kids; one in high school, one in elementary. They provide me with all sorts of opportunities to rethink the world, live my research and question my assumptions.

They've also given me insight into how differently kids learn, what works well for them, what doesn't, and how that can change. And this provides me with a number of opportunities to really think about how I, as a parent, best work with their schools to support them.

Both my kids have had excellent ECEs, educators, education workers and administrators. These are people who have worked hard, listened well, and as patiently as possible navigated larger than optimal classes and the additional demands of school plays, school clubs and team sports.

My eldest is creative, but a fairly traditional learner. She takes instructions exceedingly well, has a good sense of what's expected, navigates social situations with aplomb, is emotionally mature, works well independently, and has always been able to advocate extremely effectively for herself.

My youngest is less predictable, more out-of-the-box, with less patience for "playing the game," some of which of course has to do with how we socialize boys and girls differently. He needs more time to express himself clearly, more

time to settle, and more breaks. Adults and caregivers require more time and patience to navigate his leaps of logic (and recover from their laughter at his quirky sense of humour).

I know my daughter will be short-changed by what's being done to public education. This infuriates me.

My son, however, won't just be short-changed. He will be damaged academically and socially by these cuts. He's more likely to be that kid who will get caught in the shuffle, whose silent signals of discomfort or confusion—that often look like disinterest—can go unnoticed in a larger classroom; whose requirements for a more flexible approach while he gets comfortable with his surroundings and what's expected of him are less likely to be met. And not because educators and education workers and schools aren't working as hard as they can, and operating with the best of intentions, but because of the erosion of the system's ability to care for and meet the needs of kids who are already more vulnerable.

Of course, we'll mitigate that to the best of our ability, with meetings and tutors and extracurricular activities and extra attention that the school can simply no longer provide—not for lack of trying, but because of the higher number of kids each educator and education worker is responsible for. When it comes down to it, my son is one of the lucky ones. But access to a human right—and quality education is a human right—should never be about luck. And it should certainly never be about privilege.

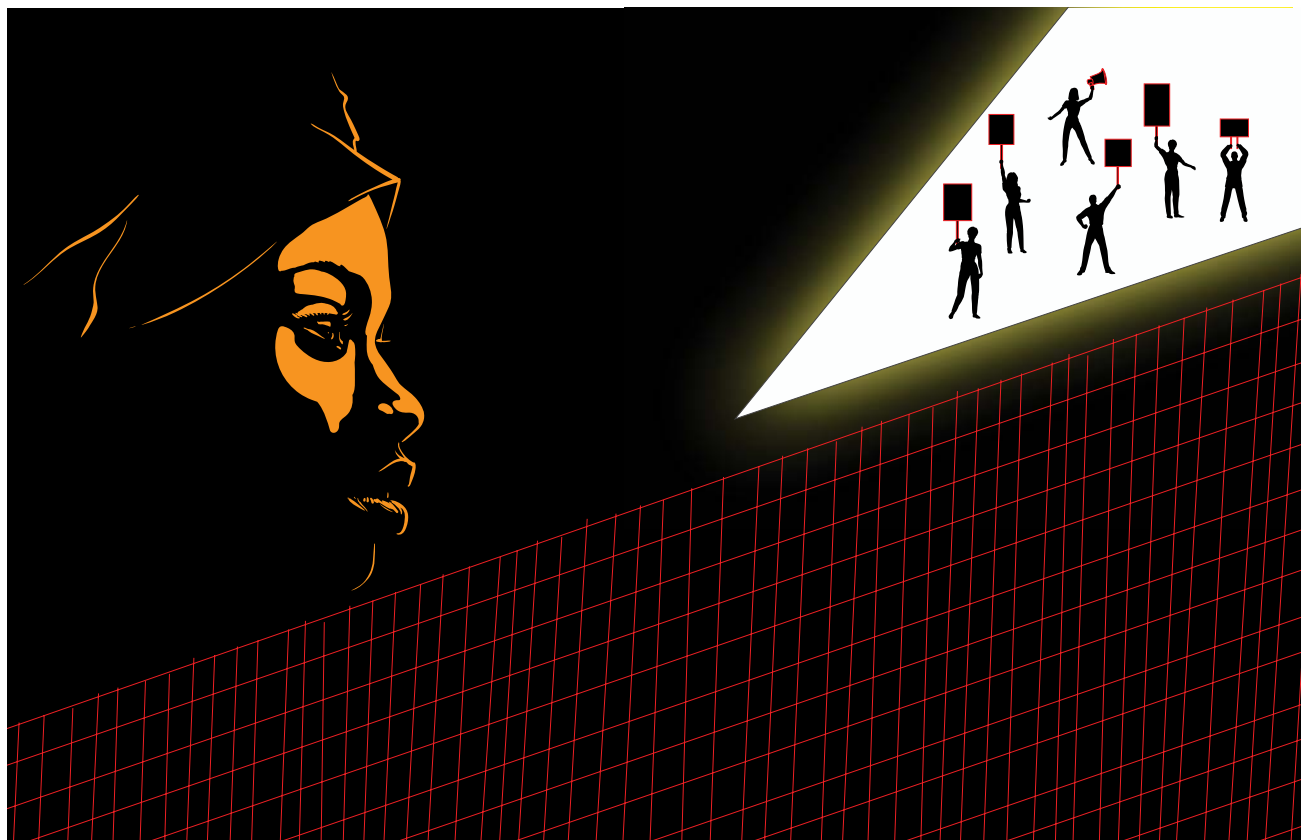
And surely our kids—all our kids—deserve more than, at best, being merely shortchanged.

Erika Shaker is interim director of the CCPA National Office and editor of *Our Schools/Our Selves*. She is on Twitter at @ErikaShaker.

This blog was originally posted on Behind the Numbers and a version of this commentary appears in the winter/spring 2020 issue of Our Schools/Our Selves, which is included with the January/February CCPA Monitor. OS/OS will now be appearing twice a year in the Monitor, and available on the CCPA website.

Fear, race, and activism

One member's story of solidarity



We ask a lot of our members, to be knowledgeable about the issues affecting education, to be engaged in union activities, and sometimes, especially of late, we ask our members to be activists. But for some members, the very notion of activism is one fraught with emotion and even danger. This is a story of an OSSTF/FEESO member who has found her way through the emotion and fear to a place of empowerment and strength. This member's experiences are situated in race and gender, as a woman of colour in an organization that has a mostly non-racialized workforce.

Carol Pinnock is a member in the Teachers Bargaining Unit of District 24, Waterloo. She shared her story with Solange Scott, a Professional Student Support Personnel member from District 12, Toronto. Below is Carol's story, as told through conversation.

Solange—Many people of colour, particularly women, experience feelings of fear and isolation. Tell me about your experience being a woman of colour and your involvement with activism?

Carol—As a young woman, I was quite vocal about injustices and had no fear stating so among those in my cultural community. As an adult, I worked for Vancouver Status of Women and helped to support single mothers like myself learn about services within the city that could help them with services and advancement. Despite the negative comments I would hear about the Downtown Eastside, I loved travelling there every day and hanging out with and sharing ideas related to living quality lives with the amazing people who lived and worked in that part of Vancouver. That said, I was never on the front line of any movement. I never wanted to be overly visible.

Solange—How did your race impact or prevent your activism?

Carol—My race has played a major role in my fears and decisions about activism. Whether real or imagined, I have always felt that as a visible minority, and up until recently the only one who looks like me in most groups in which I find myself, if there was to be any violence where I was, it would be perpetrated against me for sure; I am an easy target. As a result, I stay away from large public events. I was a child living in the Caribbean during the Civil Rights movement in the United States, far away from the daily marches, meetings, and beatings, etc. Yet those images are etched in my mind and have somehow created feelings of fear and even terror as I think of the police dogs attacking crowds of people.

Solange—Do you think fear of vio-

Artwork: Ronda Allan



lence from the public prevents people of colour from participating in social justice work?

Carol—In private conversations, I have been told “I’m not going out there, not me” as a result of some fear because of the colour of their skin; from the tone of what I am told I perceive a fear to violence. I also sense from folks that they do not see themselves represented.

Solange—Can you describe the feeling you felt when you attended and participated in your first rally? Did you feel invisible? Did people ‘remember’ that you were there?

Carol—In 1997 at the beginning of my teaching career, I walked the picket line in front of the little elementary school where I taught, as one of about eight people on my shift. I remember being passionate about our resistance to the Mike Harris agenda and was overjoyed when this regime was ousted. I remained mentally alert while walking

up and down the front of my school, but did it anyway and distracted myself by chatting with a colleague while walking. Yet the underlying reluctance to attend big rallies remained with me.

I participated in my first rally during the fall of 2019. This event took place in a small city with a sizable group of about 40 people. I decided to attend because I became quite involved in OSSTF/FEESO and wanted to “put my money where my mouth is” so to speak. As a former staff co-rep at my worksite and someone who is known by others as involved in OSSTF/FEESO, I want to encourage colleagues to go out in support of the negotiations. By setting an example and attending, I remained

passionate about the issues at stake in this round of negotiations. During these recent rounds of rally and picketing, I felt quite comfortable and safe from any aggression directed to me by anyone. It was being in the company of colleagues/friends. This eliminated the feeling of isolation. I have willingly attended many more rallies over this latest period of negotiations and labour unrest with the Ford government.

Solange—How do you think we can ensure the safety of people of colour who engage in activism?

Carol—When I think back to the Civil Rights movement again, there were many non-African-Americans who may be termed allies of those who were targets of racism. Those folks were not out of danger; however, their presence was valued. I believe that we need to use that model and have non-people of colour walking alongside people of colour. This has served me to feel less vulnerable. I see a group of all African-Canadians feeling more targeted.

Solange—You mentioned it is important for people of colour to have allies. I believe and agree that this is vital. There appears to be a belief that when a group of African-Canadians congregate that this leads to trouble, violence. While it is important to have allies, I also feel disheartened that there is a NEED for allies. To me, it means that my opinion and my safety is dependent upon the agreeance or acceptance of non African-Canadians. In order for my activism to be well-meaning it needs to be validated. This cannot and should not be. I am not saying that this is factual, I am saying that based upon numerous conversations with people of colour, they share this similar belief. In a most recent picketing, two African-Canadian women were victims of violence by a non African-Canadian. One woman was hit by his vehicle, which resulted in a serious knee injury and another woman on a different date had her vehicle hit and damaged by the same driver who hit the previous woman. People of colour are disproportionately more targeted for violence. This fear at times is a deterrent for being involved in activism. The end goal is not just having allies but that we stand together. Not the white person serving as an ally, but as equals in a strong stance.

The individual experiences of our membership matter—each story, each experience helps shape our actions locally and provincially. For Carol, the support and solidarity she felt helped develop her own activism. The strength attained through this experience acts as a political spark, and often it can lead to continued activism and leadership. Carol’s experiences do not stand as a singular example or the complexities of race and activism, but act instead as a spotlight on how we can approach engaging our members in social justice activism.

Carol Pinnock is a member of the Teachers Bargaining Unit of District 24, Waterloo and **Solange Scott** is a Professional Student Support Personnel member from District 12, Toronto.

Ontario trade

Not preparing students for the future



In recent months, the Ontario government has promised to invest millions into encouraging young people to enter the skilled trades profession. The Ontario government's skilled trades motto, "Find a career you wouldn't trade," is all well and good as long as the opportunities exist for students to take technology courses, participate in specialized programs, and attend exploratory activities to become accustomed to the apprenticeship pathway.

A January 10, 2020 news release from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development claims the government is "investing approximately \$75 million in three programs to expose high school students to the trades: \$12.7 million in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, \$42 million in the Specialist High Skills major program and \$20.8 million in a pre-apprenticeship program." This

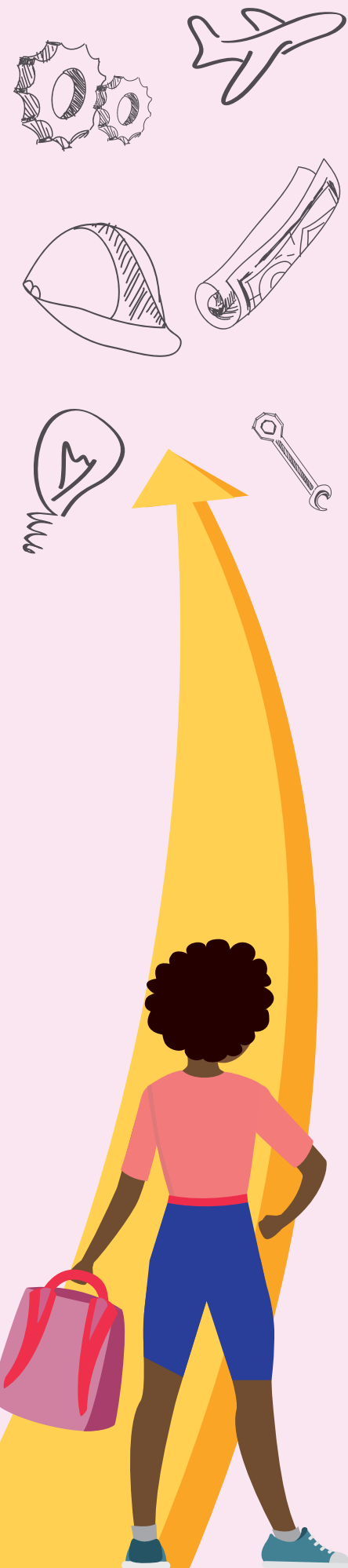
sounds amazing, but will more dollars be put into maintaining limited capacity technology classes, having teachers to oversee Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM), Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), Dual Credit and Coop programs, and ensuring supports are in place to successfully and safely train these students? Any reduction in teachers means reduced course options for students who lose the ability to fit experiential learning opportunities and technology courses into their timetables.

Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, Monte McNaughton stated in a December 2019 interview that, "We know that one out of every five jobs in the next five years is going to be in the skilled trades. We also know that one in three journey-persons today are over the age of 55, so we're reaching a crisis point in the shortage of skilled trades in Ontario."

It is true that we need more young people entering the trades, but that requires more support in our educational system, not less. Larger class average requirements present safety concerns in technology programs. To run a first-class technology program, schools need up-to-date equipment and tools, enough equipment for all students to learn, and sufficient funding for materials and opportunities to authentically engage students in the skilled trades. Even if technology classes continue to be capped, they may not be able to run as other compulsory courses will be staffed at higher ratios. Already school boards across the province are seeing a reduction in course options available for students.

If a student were to enter an apprenticeship, the new rules in Bill 47 allow for a one-to-one journey-person to apprentice ratio. If the government feels 1:1 is vital for training qualified

Artwork: Victoria Barnett



apprentices, how is 40:1 is increasing class sizes in other subjects acceptable in a secondary classroom? The very nature of apprenticeship training is in direct conflict with this government's proposed cuts to education. Also in contradiction is their claim they are committed to attracting more Indigenous people and women in the skilled trades pathway. Slashing budgets and personnel will mean many specialized programs that enhance the learning of these students won't be able to run. Decreased flexibility in timetabling, restricted course offerings limiting availability to coop, dual credits, and Level 1 training means students won't be able to fit in the necessary requirements to pursue a career in the skilled trades into their schedules.

Experiential learning programs and opportunities, including technology courses, are what keeps a number of students in school. Many students learn best in a hands-on environment, and these students appreciate the authentic experiences that a technology class brings. These learners will be at a disadvantage as the government continues to implement mandatory e-learning. A technology, coop or OYAP program cannot be delivered via computer, and with the future of return to work in a COVID-19 environment, these programs will be further impacted. Requiring students to undertake two e-learning courses will further reduce the number of course options available. The student profile for trades courses and youth apprenticeship programs are not of a student who would benefit or be successful in on line delivery of curriculum. To ensure all students are engaged in school and prepared for a highly skilled workforce to meet the demands of the economy, we need to respect their interests and create environments for all types of learners.

In conjunction with vibrant technological programs, a variety of other rich learning experiences will be difficult to provide if funding for these programs is not maintained. Many school boards opted out of the Provincial Skills Competitions this past year as there is no money in the budget. With a reduction

of technology teachers and courses, students would not even receive the training and schooling necessary to compete. Post-secondary schools and industries offer bursaries and employment to students who do well in these competitions, so not only do students miss out on this invaluable experience, but employers can also miss out to hire some excellent candidates.

The impact of education cuts and reduced funding extend well beyond the classroom. Prior to the COVID-19 shut downs, professional organizations such as the Ontario Council for Technology Education (OCTE) and Ontario Cooperative Education Association (OCEA) had to cancel their spring conferences due to budgetary cuts. These opportunities are lost to hundreds of teachers to learn innovative practices and become more informed about industry standards. There are no funds left to allow for professional development, and funding support to OCEA to help offset the costs of the conference was discontinued last year.

Education Minister Stephen Lecce stated in a November 2019 news release that "it is important students graduate with the skills and technological fluency they need in a competitive global labour market. This plan will provide more course offerings—including STEM courses—that will benefit students well beyond the classroom." He previously had commented that, "Our government is committed to helping Ontario students gain the skills they need to prepare for the demands of the global economy and jobs of the future... By increasing educational opportunities for our students in the STEM and skilled trades sectors, we are giving them the tools they need to be successful in the classroom, to the boardroom, to the shop floor."

Dear Minister Lecce, if this is the case, then how do you propose to do that when technological and other experiential programs and opportunities continue to be at risk for Ontario's students?

Eleanor MacNiven Hoecht is a teacher in District 29, Hastings-Prince Edward.

Feeling comfortable in my discomfort

Reflections on my visit with the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity



A photo of union leaders and the joint delegation standing in solidarity at the BCWS offices in Dhaka

I was in Bangladesh for six days; I took 180 pages of notes and I found sadness, strength, and resilience.

I fell in love with a country and its people; I renewed my own belief in the power of many; I became comfortable in my discomfort.

I was in Bangladesh for six days.

In June of 2019, I travelled to Bangladesh with five labour colleagues from across the country, representing a cross-section of labour organizations. Our delegation consisted of representatives from the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), the United Steel Workers (USW), and the Centre international de solidarité ouvrière (CISO), with me representing the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO).

With a population of almost 163,000,000, Bangladesh is the world's eighth most populous country. This

many people live in a country roughly twice the size of New Brunswick, with over 18,000,000 Bangladeshis living in the capital, Dhaka, where we stayed for our visit. The country is a contrast of rural and urban, rich and poor, modern and traditional. I'm not sure how I'd actually describe Dhaka—it has a Blade Runner meets old world feel. There are children everywhere and the traffic is non-stop, and the heat topped out at 45 degrees most days. The energy was electric and the people were filled with kind smiles and curious glances for this group of six from the West. I fell in love the second I stepped off the plane.

Bangladesh's history as a country is short; it gained its modern independence from India in 1972, but its cultural and social history is of course much older. It is deeply rooted in Indian and South Asian culture. It is also a country with a difficult history of labour rights and health and safety violations.

Over six years ago, on April 24, 2013, one of the deadliest industrial accidents the world has ever witnessed occurred at the Rana Plaza factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The collapse of the factory tower resulted in the death of 1,134 garment workers, with another 2,500 suffering injury. Only a year prior to this tragedy, the Tazreen factory fire Ashulia (a town just outside the capital city), killed 117 workers and injured another 200 workers when workers were unable to escape the blaze because the factory doors were locked and the windows barred.

Our goal was to meet and work with members of the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity (BCWS), and to visit with a small sampling of the country's four million garment workers. The BCWS, founded in 2001, is a grassroots labour rights advocacy organization that works with 90,000 solidary members across the country. The orga-

Photos: OSSTF/FEESO archives

nization provides training and support to various unions and labour organizations in Bangladesh as well as providing education, legal advice, and leadership training for labour rights activists. Kalpona Akter, the centre's director and one of the founding members, was our host for the duration of the delegation.

Our agenda included meetings with the labour leaders connected to BCWS as well as with government officials (both Canadian and Bangladeshi). We also had meetings with grassroots organizers at the country's factories, in order to hear from those who have been impacted by their work as labour organizers. We also made it a priority to meet with the factory-level workers to hear first-hand about the challenges they face working in the ready-made garment (RMG) sector. With over four million workers employed in the garment industry, 75 per cent of whom are women, the sector is central to the Bangladesh economy. It is, however, an industry that has experienced some of the most brutal working conditions and the most tragic industrial accidents in the world. Workers are paid poverty wages, face summary termination and violence for union involvement, are regularly denied basic rights guaranteed under Bangladesh's labour laws, and are forced to work in tragically unsafe working environments.

The most striking of meetings were with the workers and with the labour union activists. I visited the home of two different workers, both women who work the factory floor as sewers for minimum wage (approximately \$128 CAD a month). Meeting with Helen on my first night in Bangladesh, she welcomed me into her small home in the slums of Dhaka—a single room approximately 10' x 6' that held only a bed, a small fridge, a ceiling fan, and a variety of small household items and clothing. There was nowhere to stand so she asked me and my two colleagues to sit with her on her bed. The place was immaculate, but densely close, steamy. Its steel roof kept things dark and the fan helped keep the temperature down a bit. Helen lives in this room with her

teenage son and her husband (who was away living in his village for a bit while he heals from an industrial injury to his hand). She spoke of her desire for better wages, how she feels the union at her factory has helped make things safer for the workers, and of her hope her son's future. Her one dream is that he not have to work in the factory. She wants to save a small amount each month to pay for his education, but there is no free education in Bangladesh, and for those living in poverty, working in the factories, there is little hope of earning enough to send your children to school. Helen was warm, kind, a bit scared about talking openly about her union involvement, but steadfast in her belief that being a union member is important.

But being part of a union is filled with dangers. In 2012, a BCWS worker, Aminul Islam, was kidnapped, tortured, and killed, his body was dumped in the outskirts of Dhaka. Another BCWS leader, who we worked with and who has been a long-time friend of our labour delegation, told us his recent story of being kidnapped, blindfolded, taken into the forest, and told by his captors to "run." He knew if he ran, he would be shot in the back, so he kneeled down in front of them and was eventually released. For our friend, the deep emotional wounds he still suffers don't stop him from continuing to work as a labour activist.

On another day we visited a satellite office of BCWS in Ashulia (the same small town where the Tazreen factory fire happened in 2012) where we met with a group of over 30 workers fired during the 2019 "crackdown" on labour activism and unionism. Sparked by protests about a failure of the Bangladesh government to sufficiently raise the minimum wage, factory owners increased their backlash against workers who stand up for their rights. The crackdown included regular and widespread firings of workers, industry-wide blacklisting of these workers, false criminal charges laid against union members, and violent attacks by factory hired "thugs." We had expected

them to be angry, and they were, but what we didn't expect was the level of their resilience and their commitment to one another.

Mousumi sat just to my left in the small, packed meeting room; she had been fired and jailed for being part of a protest to protect a female colleague from continued sexual harassment by her boss. One of the delegation members asked her, "Once the criminal charges are dropped, once you hopefully get another job, will you still want to be part of a union?"

Her answer was simple and it left me shattered—"We will organize because the union is the only place a worker can have a voice. I faced charges because of my work family and I'll continue to fight for them."

This is true solidarity, this is true resilience. Mousumi would risk it all again to ensure the rights of her sisters, brothers, comrades, and colleagues are protected. She does this to fight for something more than a wage that sentences her to forever live in a slum, she does this to fight for health and safety regulations that keep workers from being burned alive in a factory that has its doors locked, she does this to protect her sisters from regularly experiencing gender based violence and harassment. She does this because she knows that together they can make a difference. She is comfortable in her discomfort.

Mousumi reminded me that sometimes that's a powerful spot to be in, that sometimes it's in this place that we can find our strength, that sometimes it's all worth fighting for.

In the 12 months since this visit, OSSTF/FEESO has continued its support of BCWS and the garment workers in Bangladesh. The ongoing partnership includes financial and organizing support, national and international lobbying, and public advocacy for workers in the ready made garment sector.

Tracey Germa is the editor of *Education Forum* and works as an Executive Assistant in the OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office, Communications/Political Action Department.

LA BONTÉ
est une ressource renouvelable

OSSTF/FEESO
PRÉSENTE
**LES
PRIX DE**

**RÉALISATIONS
DES ÉLÈVES
2021**

en l'honneur de Marion Drysdale

Ne regardez
jamais quelqu'un
de haut à moins
que vous ne l'aidiez
à se relever.

—Jesse Jackson

La bonté est une ressource renouvelable.

Nous en disposons tous d'innombrables quantités à donner.
La manière dont nous traitons les autres, les animaux et même
notre planète témoigne de ce que nous sommes en tant
qu'être humain. La bonté, c'est se préoccuper des autres
et des choses même lorsqu'ils ne se soucient pas de nous.
Ça, c'est de la bonté.

Partagez votre
ESPRIT CRÉATIF
avec le monde
qui vous entoure!

Les gagnants provinciaux de chacune des neuf
catégories remporteront un montant de 1 000 \$
et seront invités à la Réunion annuelle
de l'Assemblée provinciale de la Fédération des
enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires
de l'Ontario, à Toronto, pour recevoir leur prix.
Les Prix de réalisations des élèves célèbrent le
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AMITIÉ
ATTENTIONNÉ

SOUTENANT

COMPASSION

AFFECTUEUX

TOLÉRANT

INCLUSIF

MANIÈRES

BONNES

ÉGALITÉ

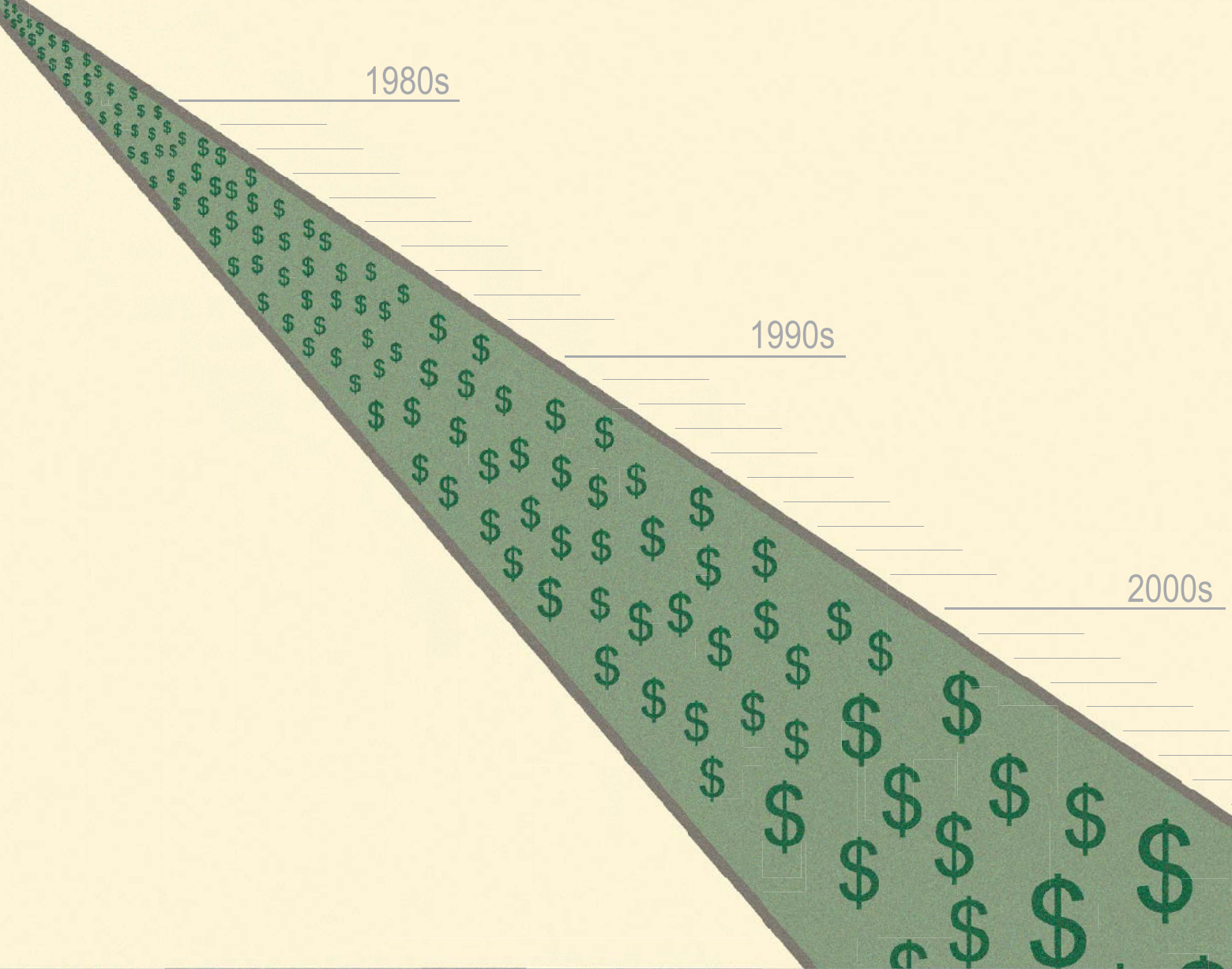
EMPATHIE

FAMILLE

OUVERT

ENCOURAGEANT

AMITIÉ



Artwork: Ronda Allan

From gap to chasm and back again

How public services can help bridge Ontario's widening income divide

by Natalie Mehra

Imagine if you will a line up of students standing shoulder to shoulder facing towards one end of an empty school gym. There are ten students in total. Each person represents an income decile—that is, ten per cent of income earners.

A teacher asks the students to walk forward one step for each thousand dollars in income their income category gained over the period of one decade, or backwards one step for each thousand dollars in income their income category lost over the same period. The extent of that change is shocking.

Let's ask our imaginary students to start in 1980 and show us how income inequality has grown over the last generation. In the first decade, from 1980–1990, the highest income earner walks forward 21 steps. The next highest walks forward 13 steps. The third highest walks forward six steps. So far, so good. But then, the high-middle income earner walks forward just one step. The fifth person (a middle-income earner) actually walks backward one step. The next middle-income earner walks backward two and a half steps. The low-mid income earner walks backward three and a half steps. The lower in-

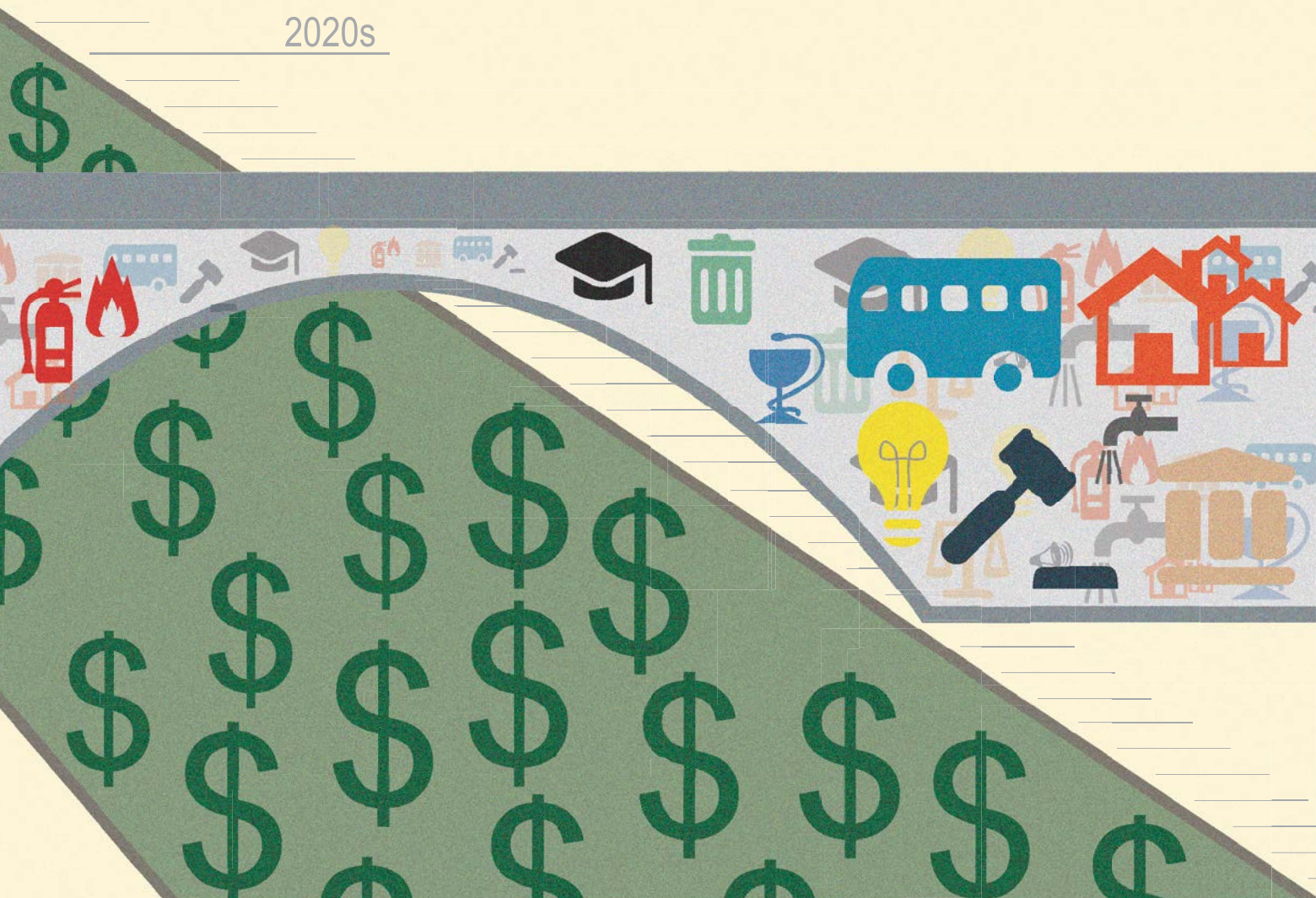
come earner walks backward two steps. The lowest income earner inches forward one third of a step. (All figures are shown in Chart 1.)¹

After only one decade we can see that our line up has fanned out quite dramatically. The top half have moved forward. Except for the lowest income earner, the bottom half have walked backward. But we are not done.

Let's look at the next decade: from 1990–2000 the highest income earner walks forward a whopping 57 steps. They are almost at the end of the gym. The next highest income earner walks forward six and a half steps. The third highest moves two and a half steps forward. The middle-income categories are stagnant, their incomes inching forward or backward, depicted by the students walking just one or two steps each. The lower income categories all mark losses: three and a half steps back, two steps back, and for those who have the least to lose in the lowest income category, a half step backward (more than erasing their small gain in the previous decade).

From 2000–2010 the fan spreads ever wider. We are now

2020s



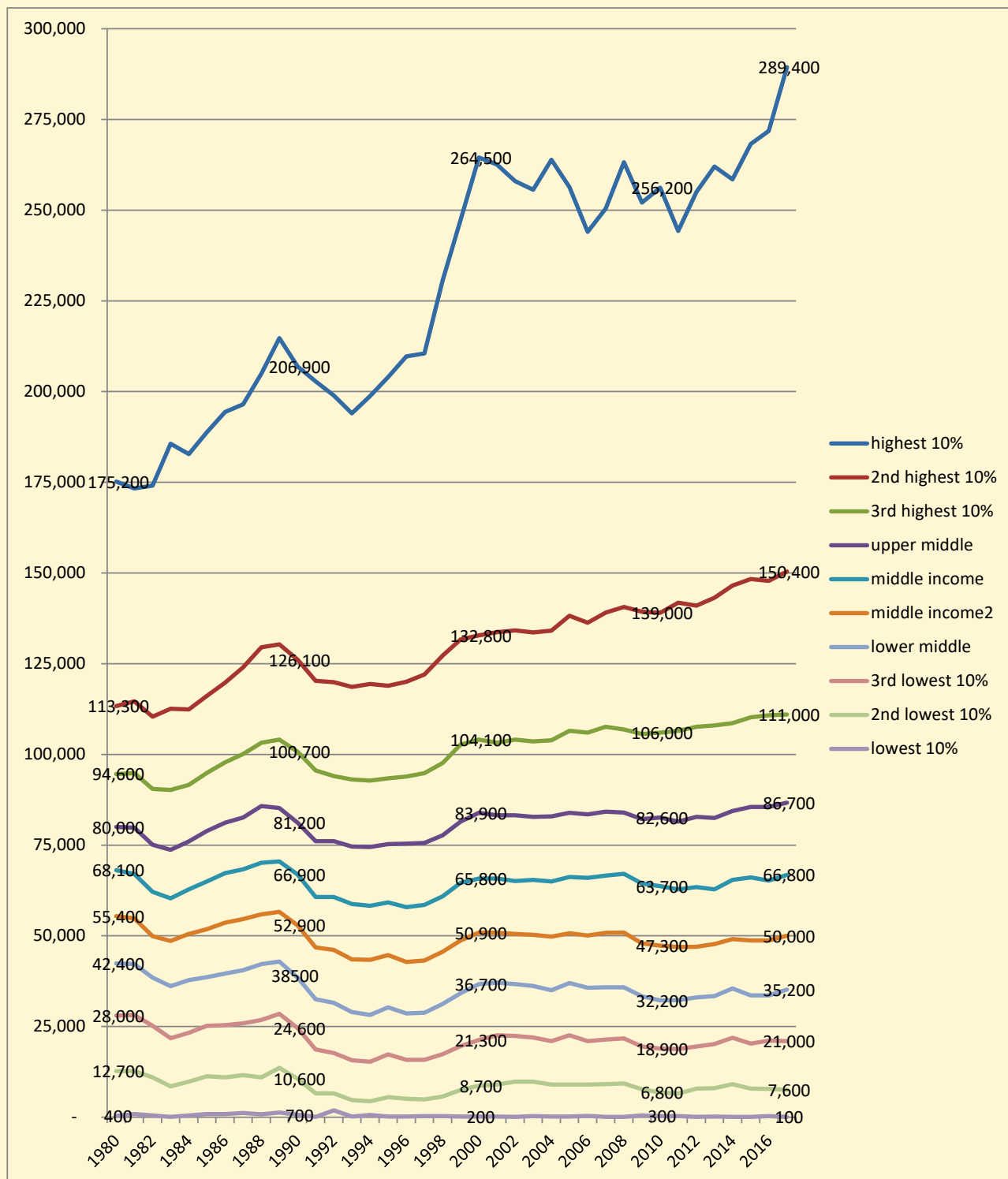
Ontario Income Inequality

1980–2017

Family Income Before Taxes and Transfers (2017 Dollars)

By Income Decile (each 10% of income earners)

Source: Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0192-01



out of space in the gym. The highest income earners are so far gone they would be in another room. Again, the middle does not change much, forward a bit, back a bit. Lower incomes settle at their new lower levels.

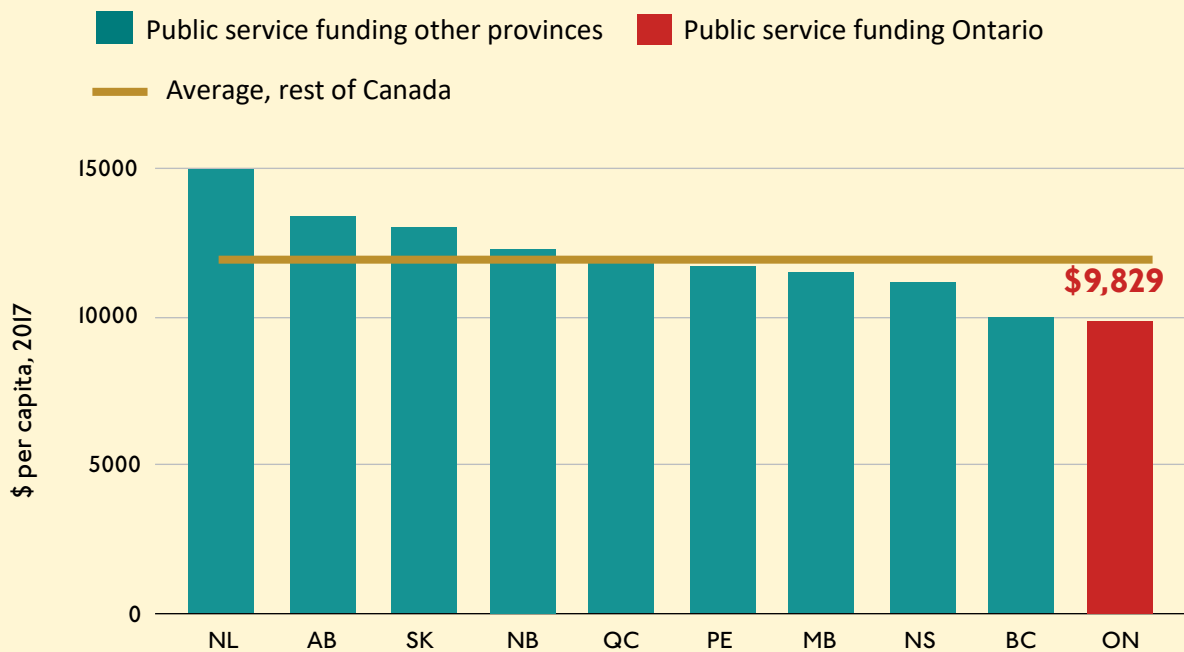
In the final decade starting in 2010 we can measure up to 2017, the last year in which Statistics Canada data is available. Unbelievably, the highest income earners walk forward 33 steps more! From where they started, they have now walked more than 100 steps. The next highest are big

winners too. They have moved forward 37 steps from the beginning of our exercise. The third highest are not doing poorly. They have walked forward sixteen and half steps. The high-middle income earner is also doing alright: six and a half steps forward. But everyone from the middle-income earners to the lowest income earners has lost ground.

The gap has stretched further than we can measure in a school gym. In truth it is no longer just a gap. It has become a chasm.

Ontario Funds Public Services at Lowest Rate in Canada

Chart II. Public Funding of All Provincial Programs (Public Services) 2017



Source: Financial Accountability Office of Ontario



Shares of wealth reveal another dimension of inequality. “Wealth” is the value of assets accumulated by people: property, stocks, bonds, pensions, income funds, savings and the like, minus debts. It gives a sense of how much resilience people might have to weather a downturn in income.

In 2014 the Broadbent Institute surveyed Canadians’ perceptions about wealth disparity. They found that while Canadians believe that the gap between the richest and the poorest is growing, they underestimate significantly the breadth and depth of wealth inequality. In reality, the wealthiest fifth (twenty per cent) of Canadians own more than two-thirds of all the wealth in the country. The bottom twenty per cent own no wealth at all.² The vast majority of Canadians, no matter which political party they supported, did not agree with such an inequitable distribution of affluence.

It is a bleak image indeed, but it does not have to be the case.

Ten years ago, economists Hugh Mackenzie and Richard Shillington set out to calculate the benefit of public services for each Canadian. What they found is that Canadians depend on public services such as education, health care, child care, public pensions, employment insurance and other services for their living standard. Their findings, translated into today’s dollars are impressive: the average per person benefit of public services in Canada is \$21,135 and a median income household’s benefit from public services is \$51,100 per year. More than two-thirds of Canadians’ benefit from public services actually equals the value of more than 50 per cent of their household’s total earned income.³ The bottom line? For two-thirds of us, the value of public services is like having a whole extra income earner in your house.

The Conference Board of Canada’s report commissioned by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation, “The Economic Case for Investing in Education” takes it a step further. Looking at public education alone, from Kindergarten to Grade 12, the report calculates the multiplier effect of the almost 170,000 jobs and economic activity it creates. It then adds in cost savings from increasing the graduation rate resulting in better health, less need for social assistance and the criminal justice system. Each dollar of public education spending generates \$1.30 in total economic impacts, like

buying a house or shopping at a local store, contributing to the local economy and to provincial and federal coffers in taxes. Increasing resources for public education could lift high school graduation rates, they found, and save millions each year in health care, social assistance and criminal justice costs.⁴ (For more information read article “Investing in education—Investing in our future” Education Forum Fall 2019, Vol. 46, Issue 1, page 14.)

When Doug Ford ran for election, he criss-crossed Ontario visiting donut shops and the like, repeating promises for fiscal prudence with no lay offs, calming fears about privatization, appearing reasonable and measured. But under the radar Ford’s fiscal plan was uncompromising. Mike Moffatt is an economist at Western University. His comparative analysis of Ontario’s political parties’ fiscal (budget) plans were reported in one day of stories in the media and then the issue was dropped. But Professor Moffatt published his spreadsheets online for all to review⁵ and what he found is eye-popping. Doug Ford’s plan, laid out in his platform, was to cut provincial revenues by \$22 billion in its first three to four years. Those revenues are the money used to fund our public services and social programs. In context, the Harris government of the 1990s cut \$15 billion in today’s dollars in its first four years. Those were the deepest cuts to provincial revenues in our province’s history. They led to devastation of social programs and services. After Harris, from 2003–2006 the McGuinty government expanded public services. Then, when Dwight Duncan became finance minister, a new period of tax cuts for corporations began along with austerity budgets for public services. As the government struggled to pay for the corporate tax cuts, the 2008 financial crisis hit reducing revenues further and expanding the deficit. Real-dollar cuts and funding curtailment for public services were imposed. But nothing in our history has touched Doug Ford’s fiscal (budget) plan to cut more than \$22 billion. If they are followed through, this would be the most radical slashing of the public sector in our province’s and our country’s history.

Though they have not reached \$22 billion, already we can tally the extraordinary devastation of Ford’s cuts. The result is nothing like the election campaign promises: more than 700 green energy projects cancelled; environmental cuts from wind

to tree-planting programs and flood management funds; real-dollar cuts to hospitals and long-term care; the axing of prescription drug coverage for youth 25 and under; cancellation of planned drug overdose prevention sites and the Hamilton LRT; elimination of funding for the College of Midwives; cuts to Public Health Units and mental health funding; the slashing of budgets for school repairs, legal aid, and financial assistance for college and university students; elimination of free tuition for low income students; the scrapping of three planned university campuses and the College of Trades; larger class sizes; mandatory online courses; cancellation of summer curriculum-writing programs for sign language and Indigenous languages; cuts to and restructuring of autism funding; downloading of costs for child care spaces. The list could go on and on.⁶

It is tragic that an entire generation has grown up hearing, almost unchallenged, the mantra that public service spending is out of control. In health care, public funding (which is the lowest in Canada and has been declining for decades) is treated like some kind of insatiable Pac-Man. We have been told repeatedly that health care is “eating up” the provincial budget. Journalists routinely query how we are to afford to meet basic needs even when faced with humanitarian crises. “But how are you proposing to bend the cost curve?” we are chastised. The media has bought into the premise of scarcity without any critical analysis. The status quo is untenable, we are told.

In truth the status quo is untenable. We cannot slash our way to prosperity. The fact that income and wealth are so skewed in favour of the wealthy; that almost half of the population of an entire generation now finds itself falling behind; that more and more the lottery of birth determines life chances as public services and supports are stripped away;

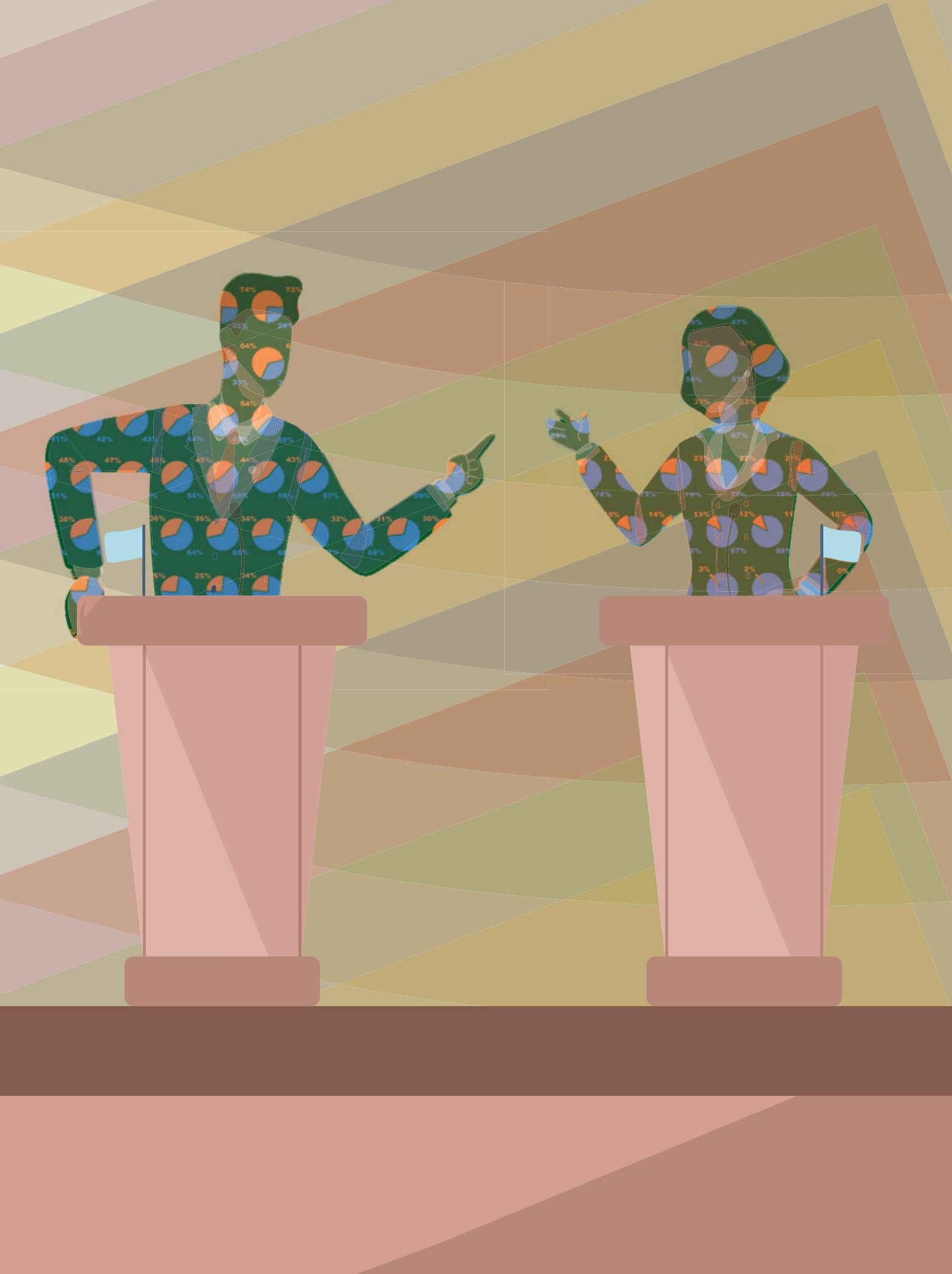
these are among the most important issues of our times. We cannot let them go without challenge.

Our history shows that strong unions and citizens’ movements have been on the forefront of change that has improved the lives of Canadians: from the late 19th century’s push to end child labour and establish minimum wages; throughout the 20th century’s efforts to protect workers against death and disability on the job, to win public health care and establish public pensions; and more recently in the struggle for equal pay for women. The gains in income equality in the post-World War period were a result of a fundamental challenge to the old order that insisted on more democratic workplaces, public policies that served the public interests not solely private wealth, and importantly, the creation and expansion of public services that expanded life chances and bolstered families’ standards of living.

Earlier this year, teachers were on the frontline, striking against the cuts that the Ford government has implemented and proposed future cuts. Health care advocates and unions too have been rallying and protesting in the thousands, and through these actions all across Ontario we have successfully forced the government back on cuts to public health, long-term care, paramedic services, public hospitals and more. Collectively, our work shows that we can make a difference. Indeed, together we have changed history, and we have made tremendous progress toward the development of a just society often in bleaker circumstances than today’s. We *can* stem the rising tide of inequality. We are among the wealthiest people in the world at the wealthiest time in our history. Of course we can afford to take care of each other, if we only choose to.

Natalie Mehra is the Executive Director of the Ontario Health Coalition.

- 1 We should pause here to note that our straight line at the beginning should not be taken to mean there was ever complete income equality. There were high-income people and low-income people in 1980. Income shares have followed historic patterns of discrimination, with women, racialized people indigenous people and other marginalized groups disproportionately represented in the lower income categories, and this continues to be the case. But we can say, overall, from the post-World War period up until about 1980, the incomes distributed to Ontarians through salaries and wages and pensions were getting more equitable. After that the situation changed and it is this change that we are demonstrating.
- 2 Broadbent Institute, *The Wealth Gap: Perceptions and Misconceptions in Canada*, December 2014.
- 3 Mackenzie, Hugh and Shillington, Richard, *Canada’s Quiet Bargain: The benefits of public spending* Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, April 2009.
- 4 McArthur-Gupta, Aimee, *The Economic Case for Investing in Education*, The Conference Board of Canada, 2019.
- 5 Resource
- 6 Lists of the Ford government’s cuts see:
www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca/index.php/update-mounting-health-care-cuts
off.ca/power-of-many-ford-tracker-pc-cuts-and-privatization-to-date
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WHAT A BUDGET MEANS

Ontario's Financial Accountability Office's report
and what it really tells us

by Chris Samuel

Provincial budgets sound like they're about the economy. They talk about economic growth, fiscal projections (a.k.a. revenue and spending expectations) and deficits. Fundamentally, though, government budgets are about one thing: politics. They're about economic priorities and decisions, but because government budgets are ultimately political, those priorities are set by a mixture of ideology and plans for re-election.

Naturally, governments deny acting ideologically and downplay the relationship between their decisions and their re-election prospects. They euphemize their actions as 'what the people want' rather than, 'what we think will get us votes next time around.' The difference matters because governments that truly serve the population are interested in investments and the long-term success of our communities. Governments motivated by ideology and re-election prospects think in terms of what they can get away with while still managing to hold on to their jobs. This reflects a fundamental tension in economic decision-making: on the one hand, investing in building the province requires adequate revenue; on the other hand, promising to 'get out of the way' and let the market decide allows for short-term thinking and populist sloganeering about budget deficits. Investing is difficult but necessary for long-term prosperity. Sloganeering about

deficits is easy and helps bolster election prospects.

For the Ford Tories, the combination of ideology and sloganeering brings us to a concrete economic and political agenda: cut funding to create crises in key areas and use those crises as an excuse for privatization and further cuts. That's why OSSTF/FEESO and our allies keep a close watch on budget updates and the priorities they signal. A report published by the Financial Accountability Office in December 2019 provides more evidence that the government is creating crises rather than investing in the public services that allow all of us to share in our province's growth.

The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO), led by Financial Accountability Officer Peter Weltman, is responsible for providing "independent analysis on the state of the Province's finances, trends in the provincial economy and related matters important to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario."ⁱ In practice, this means the FAO analyzes economic trends and issues reports evaluating the government's budgetary plans and projections. Some reports provide insights into specific spending areas such as health and education, while others evaluate broader issues such as government the government's fiscal projections (that is, how much revenue they expect to bring in and how much they plan to spend). The FAO's analyses don't evaluate

whether spending makes sense from a policy perspective, they just focus on whether the math adds up.

Even without policy evaluations, FAO reports offer important context for government initiatives and spending. For example, remember the government's panic-inducing claim that they had inherited a \$15 billion deficit from the previous government? The government used it as justification to trot out numerous cuts to programs, ranging from autism services to tree planting. The \$15 billion deficit claim turned out to be grossly misleading. In a report last year, the FAO showed that the actual deficit for 2018–2019 was \$7.4 billion—about half the government's number.ⁱⁱ This certainly lends credence to the observation that the government's priorities aren't really about deficit cutting!

Twice a year, the FAO issues its Economic and Budget Outlook. These reports are based on the FAO's own economic analysis, government budget documents and, where appropriate, policy announcements. The first report evaluates the budget in the spring. The second evaluates the Fall Economic Statement (FES). It sounds like dry reading, but the FAO's Fall 2019 Economic and Budget Outlook contains some big red flags!

The 2019 Fall Economic Statement reaffirmed the government's commitment to balancing the budget by

Artwork: Ronda Allan

2023–2024. It predicted deficits of \$9.0 billion for 2019–2020 and \$6.7 billion in 2020–2021.ⁱⁱⁱ The FAO's analysis, though, shows that deficit scaremongering was never really about balancing the books—or at least that was never the primary goal. As the FAO notes, if the government maintained its current spending, it will have a small, \$0.6 billion deficit next year, for the 2021–2022 budget. By contrast, the government projects that it will have a \$4.4 billion deficit in that year. Why the difference? According to the FAO, the difference can only be accounted for by assuming that the government has either unannounced

tax cuts, new spending or some combination of both on the way.^{iv} They can't say for sure because, as we all know, the Ford Tories don't have a strong record on transparency and predictability. Nonetheless, the only way to reconcile the government's projections with current spending is through new tax cuts or new spending on programs and services.

Think the difference is going to made up with new spending? Keep reading.

On a per person basis, only British Columbia spends less than Ontario on programs (such as education, health care, the environment, and so on). Far from a land of wasteful spenders, Ontario is rel-

atively efficient in its spending. Or at the very least, we are not spending as much and as quickly as most other provinces.

Given that Ontario is Canada's richest province, with the largest GDP, having the second-lowest spending per person a shameful abandonment of the responsibility to invest in this province and its residents. According to the FAO, it's going to get worse. The recent FAO report shows that in order for the government to meet its current targets, it will reduce spending by an additional \$1,070 per person. In terms of per person spending, that will take us from second-last to bottom of the barrel.

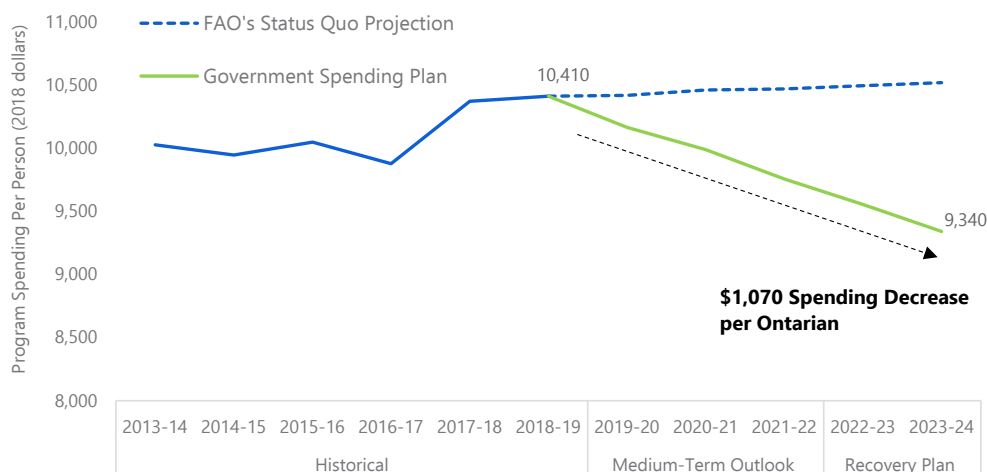
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Per Capita Program Expenditures, 2017–2018



Source: Financial Accountability Office of Ontario. "Economic and Budget Outlook: Assessing Ontario's Medium-term Budget Plan (Spring 2019)." 2019, p. 36.

The government plans to reduce spending per person by \$1,070 over five years



Note: Estimates for program spending in 2022-23 and 2023-24 are based on program spending growth rates from the 2019 Ontario Budget.

Source: Ontario Public Accounts, 2019 Ontario Budget, 2019 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review and FAO.

CE QUE SIGNIFIE UN BUDGET

Le rapport du Bureau de la responsabilité financière de l'Ontario et ce qu'il nous dit vraiment

par Chris Samuel

Les budgets provinciaux donnent l'impression qu'ils portent sur l'économie. Ils parlent de croissance économique, de projections fiscales (que l'on appelle également les prévisions de revenus et de dépenses) et de déficits. Fondamentalement par contre, les budgets gouvernementaux ne portent que sur une seule chose : la politique. Ils portent sur les priorités et les décisions politiques, mais puisque les budgets gouvernementaux sont ultimement politiques, ces priorités sont établies par un mélange d'idéologies et de plans visant la réélection.

Naturellement, les gouvernements nient leurs actions idéologiques et minimisent le lien entre leurs décisions et leurs perspectives de réélection. Ils décrivent leurs actions comme étant « ce que le peuple veut » plutôt que « ce qui, selon nous, nous permettra de récolter le plus de votes aux prochaines élections ». La différence est importante, parce que les gouvernements qui sont réellement au service de la population se soucient des investissements et des réussites à long terme de nos communautés. Les gouvernements motivés par l'idéologie et les perspectives de réélection pensent en termes de ce qu'ils peuvent faire sans se faire pincer, tout en conservant leur poste. Cela reflète une tension fondamentale dans la prise de décisions économiques : d'un côté, un investissement dans la prospérité de la province nécessite un revenu suffisant; d'un autre côté, la promesse de « ne pas intervenir » et de laisser le marché décider donne lieu à un raisonnement à court terme et à des slogans populistes sur les déficits budgétaires. Investir est une tâche difficile, mais nécessaire à

la prospérité à long terme. Les slogans faciles sur les déficits nécessitent peu d'efforts et favorisent les perspectives de réélection.

Pour les conservateurs de Doug Ford, la combinaison de l'idéologie et des slogans faciles nous mène à un programme économique et politique concret : Couper le financement dans le but de créer une crise dans les secteurs clés et utiliser ces crises comme excuse pour privatiser et faire d'autres coupures. Voilà pourquoi OSSTF/FEESO et ses alliés gardent un œil vigilant sur les mises à jour budgétaires et les priorités qu'elles présagent. Un rapport publié par le Bureau de la responsabilité financière en décembre 2019 prouve davantage que le gouvernement crée des crises plutôt que d'investir dans les services publics qui nous permettent à tous de partager la croissance de notre province.

Le Bureau de la responsabilité financière de l'Ontario (BRF), sous la direction de Peter Weltman, directeur de la responsabilité financière, a la responsabilité de fournir une « analyse indépendante de l'état des finances de la province, des tendances de l'économie provinciale et des questions connexes qui sont importantes pour l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario »¹. En pratique, cela signifie que le BRF analyse les tendances économiques et produit des rapports qui évaluent les plans et les projections budgétaires du gouvernement. Certains rapports offrent des indications en ce qui concerne les domaines de dépenses précis comme les soins de santé et l'éducation, tandis que d'autres évaluent les questions plus vastes comme les projections fiscales du

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But wait...if spending is going down, then why is the government projecting a \$4.4 billion deficit, compared to the FAO's projection of a \$0.6 deficit? Tax cuts.

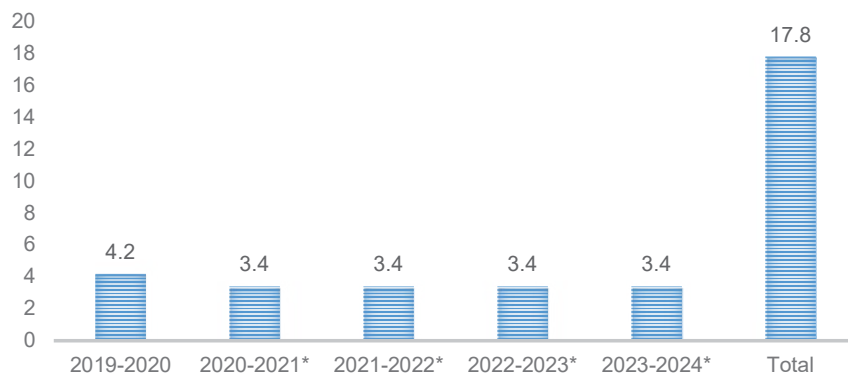
As the FAO has shown, several government decisions have already weakened revenue growth. In fact, for 2017–2018 there was already a \$4.1 billion loss in revenue that could have gone to spending on essential public services. These decisions include cancellation of

the cap and trade program (loss of \$1.9 billion), reduction in asset sales (loss of \$0.9 billion), an Ontario Energy Board ruling (\$0.4 billion) and removal of the Debt Retirement Charge from electricity bills (\$0.6 billion).^v These and other policy decisions have impacts long into the future. The FAO now estimates that revenue decisions will cost \$4.2 billion this year and then an average of 3.4 billion in each of the next four years. By the end of 2023–2024, that's nearly \$18 billion dollars in lost revenue!

In addition, the FAO estimates—based on government forecasts and announcements—that revenue will be shrunk even further through tax cuts. The exact size, nature and beneficiaries of those cuts are so far being kept secret, but those tax cuts are going to cost about \$2.3 billion in 2021–2022 and reach \$3.8 billion by 2023–2024. This will create new and unnecessary budget pressures, which will be used to justify additional cuts to programs.

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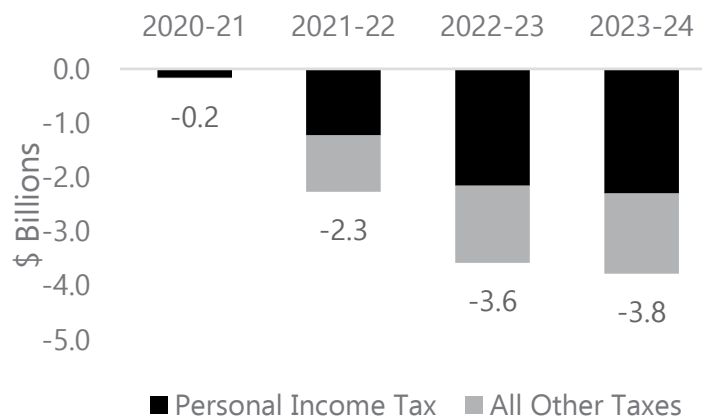
Impact of Revenue Policy (\$ billions)



Source: FAO, Economic and Budget outlook, Fall 2019, page 12.

*Projected annual average

Revenue impact of unannounced tax policy changes



Source: FAO.

/suite de la page 75

gouvernement (c'est-à-dire, le revenu qu'il s'attend de recevoir et combien il compte dépenser). Les analyses du BRF n'évaluent pas si les dépenses sont judicieuses du point de vue des politiques; elles ne se concentrent que sur l'équilibre des comptes.

Même sans évaluation des politiques, les rapports du BRF fournissent un contexte important pour les initiatives et les dépenses gouvernementales. Par exemple, vous vous rappelez l'affirmation alarmiste du gouvernement indiquant qu'il avait hérité d'un déficit de 15 milliards de dollars du gouvernement précédent? Le gouvernement s'en est servi pour justifier de nombreuses coupures de programmes, à partir des services en matière d'autisme jusqu'à la plantation d'arbres. Cette affirmation sur le déficit de 15 milliards de dollars s'est avérée grossièrement trompeuse. Dans un rapport l'an dernier, le BRF a démontré que le déficit réel pour 2018–2019 était de 7,4 milliards de dollars, environ la moitié de ce que le gouvernement affirmaitⁱⁱ. Cela vient certainement appuyer l'observation que les priorités du gouvernement ne

portent pas réellement sur la réduction du déficit!

Deux fois par année, le BRF publie ses Perspectives économiques et budgétaires. Ces rapports sont fondés sur la propre analyse du BRF, les documents budgétaires du gouvernement et, le cas échéant, les annonces de politiques. Le premier rapport évalue le budget au printemps et le second évalue l'Exposé annuel d'automne (EAA). Cela peut sembler une lecture monotone, mais les Perspectives économiques et budgétaires du BRF de l'automne 2019 sont truffées de signes précurseurs!

L'Exposé annuel d'automne 2019 réaffirmait l'engagement du gouvernement à équilibrer le budget au plus tard en 2023–2024. Il projetait des déficits de 9 milliards de dollars en 2019–2020 et de 6,7 milliards de dollars en 2020–2021ⁱⁱⁱ. L'analyse du BRF, par contre, indique que les propos alarmistes sur le déficit n'avaient rien à voir avec l'équilibre budgétaire, ou du moins n'en ont jamais été le but premier. Comme l'indique le BRF, si le gouvernement maintenait ses dépenses au niveau actuel, il se retrouverait avec un léger déficit de 0,6 milliard de dollars

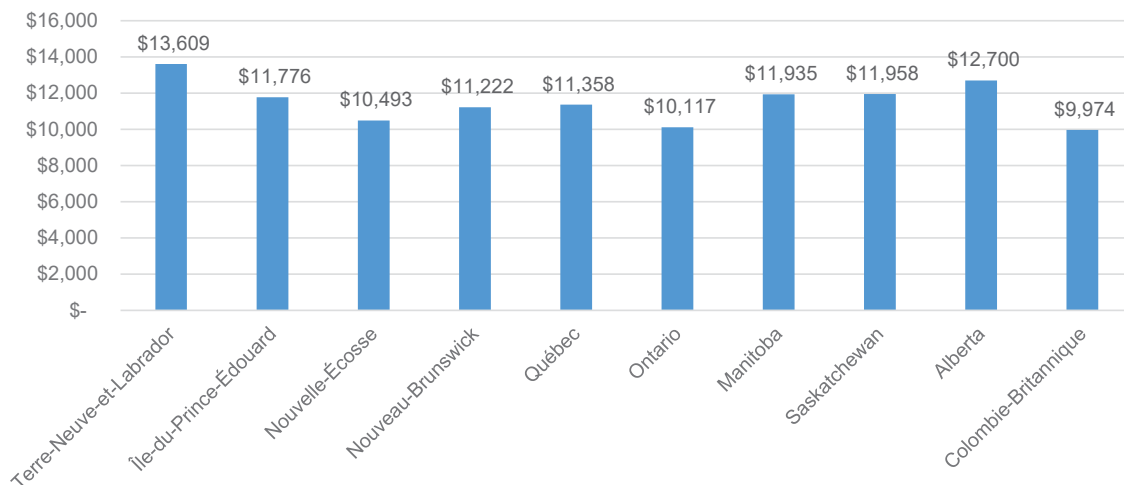
l'an prochain, dans le budget 2021–2022. En contraste, le gouvernement prévoit un déficit de 4,4 milliards de dollars cette même année. Pourquoi une telle différence? Selon le BRF, la différence ne peut s'expliquer qu'en supposant que le gouvernement prévoit des réductions d'impôt, de nouvelles dépenses ou une combinaison des deux, qui n'ont toujours pas été annoncées^{iv}. Le BRF ne peut l'affirmer avec certitude, puisque, comme nous le savons tous, les conservateurs de Doug Ford n'ont pas la réputation d'être transparents et prévisibles. Néanmoins, la seule façon de rapprocher les projections du gouvernement aux dépenses actuelles est par de nouvelles réductions d'impôts ou de nouvelles dépenses dans les programmes et services.

Vous croyez que la différence va être comblée par de nouvelles dépenses? Poursuivez la lecture.

Sur une base « par personne », il n'y a que la Colombie-Britannique qui dépense moins que l'Ontario sur les programmes (comme l'éducation, les soins de santé, l'environnement, etc.) Loin d'adopter une attitude dépensière,

/suite à la page 79

Dépenses de programme par habitant, 2017–2018



Source : Bureau de la responsabilité financière de l'Ontario. « Perspectives financières et économiques : Évaluation du plan budgétaire à moyen terme de l'Ontario » (printemps 2019). 2019, p. 36.

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Maybe those numbers seem abstract, so let's put them into the context of current negotiations. If you combine the revenue reductions from policy decisions for 2019–2023 (the three years of our next contract) with the unannounced tax cuts for the same period, you get a total forgone revenue of \$13.5 billion. That's revenue the government could have taken in, but decided to give up. Keeping OSSTF/FEESO wages in line with inflation over that same period would cost approximately \$200 million. That means, the cost of inflationary increases to our wages would be about 1.5 per cent

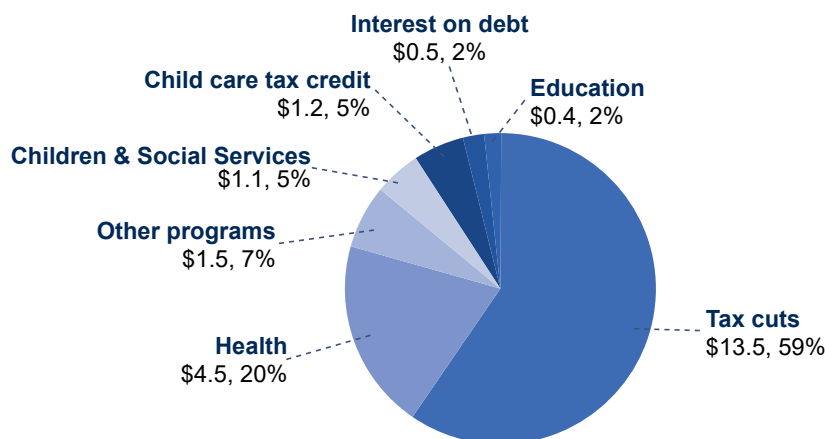
of the money the Ford Tories are giving up, mainly for the benefit of large corporations and wealthy individuals and at the expense of the environment, social supports and public education.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) has done an outstanding job of comparing how much the government expects to increase its spending on areas that are consistently a priority to Ontarians (education, health care, social services) and how much it is planning to spend on tax cuts. Over the next three years, nearly 60 per cent of spending increases will go to tax cuts, while a mere 2 per cent will go to education.^{vi}

But that's not the worst of it. CCPA's chart shows us the "nominal" increases to spending. That means spending increases that don't take into account inflation. Those figures also don't take into account population growth. With predicted population growth of 5.3 per cent and inflation of 6.3 per cent, the government's spending plans leave a \$5 billion hole. That's \$5 billion worth of education, health and other spending that Ontarians want, but for which the government simply isn't budgeting.^{vii} Remember one of the core goals of this government: underfund services to create crises and then use those crises to privatization and further cuts.

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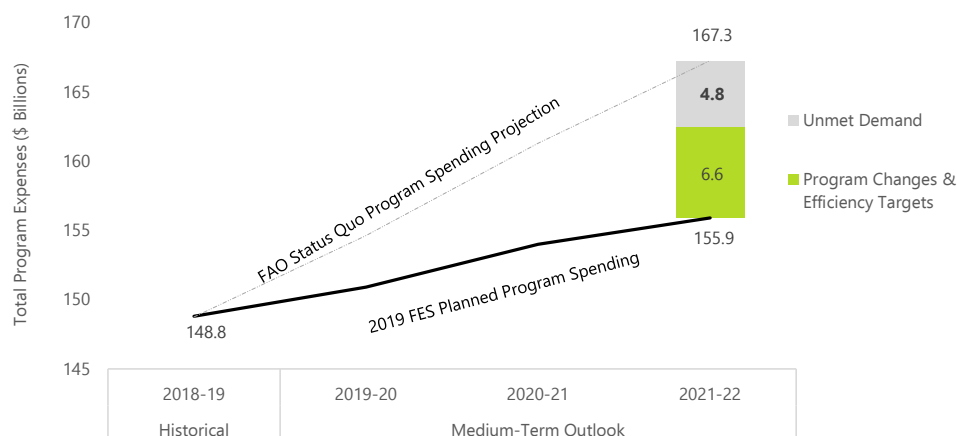
Where is the money going?
Nominal spending increase and revenue loss, Ontario, 2019–20 to 2021–22 three-year totals (\$billions)



@ccpa

Source: FAO Economic and Budget Outlook, Fall 2019; 2019 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review; 2019 Ontario Budget; calculations by the author.

Demand for public services exceeds the government's planned spending by \$4.8 billion in 2021-22



Source: FAO analysis of data from Treasury Board Secretariat.

/suite de la page 77

l'Ontario se montre relativement efficace dans ses dépenses. Ou tout au moins, nous ne dépensons pas autant et aussi rapidement que la plupart des autres provinces.

L'Ontario étant la province la plus riche au Canada en fonction de son PIB le plus élevé, le fait qu'elle se classe deuxième en termes des dépenses les plus basses par personne constitue un abandonnement honteux de la responsabilité d'investir dans cette province et ses résidents. Selon le BRF, les choses vont empirer. Le plus récent rapport du BRF indique que dans le but d'atteindre ses cibles actuelles, le gouvernement devra réduire

ses dépenses d'une somme additionnelle de 1 070 \$ par personne. En termes de dépenses par personne, cela nous fera passer d'avant-dernier au tout dernier rang.

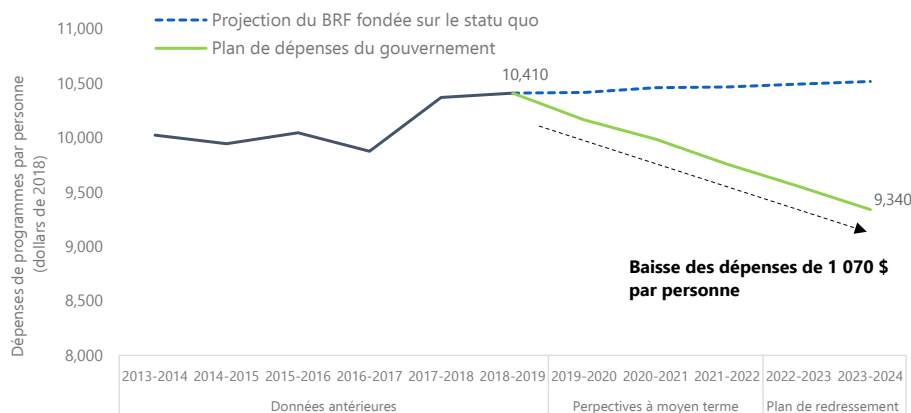
Cependant, attendez un peu... si les dépenses sont réduites, alors pourquoi le gouvernement prévoit-il un déficit de 4,4 milliards de dollars, comparativement à la projection du BRF d'un déficit de 0,6 milliard de dollars? La réponse : des réductions d'impôt.

Comme le BRF l'a démontré, plusieurs décisions gouvernementales ont déjà affaibli la croissance des revenus. En fait, pour l'exercice 2017–2018, il y avait déjà une perte de revenus

se chiffrant à 4,1 milliards de dollars, une somme qui aurait pu être investie dans des services publics essentiels. Ces décisions comprennent l'annulation du programme Plafonnement et échange (une perte de 1,9 milliard de dollars), une réduction de la vente d'actifs (perte de 0,9 milliard de dollars), la décision de la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario (0,4 milliard de dollars) et l'élimination de la redevance de liquidation de la dette sur les factures d'électricité (0,6 milliard de dollars)^v. Ces décisions politiques et d'autres ont des répercussions qui se feront sentir loin dans l'avenir. Le BRF prévoit maintenant que les décisions

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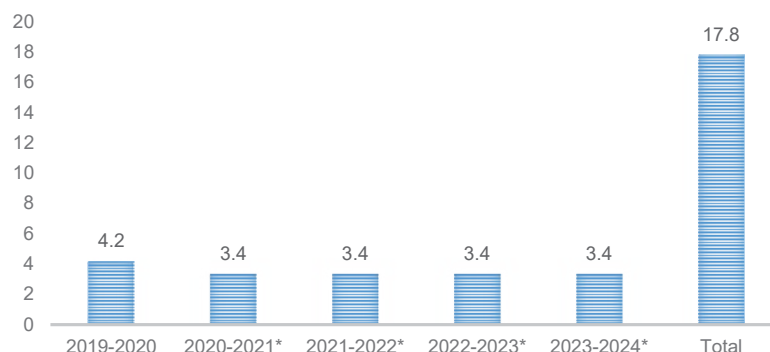
Le plan de la province prévoit des réductions des dépenses par personne de 1 070 \$ sur cinq ans



Nota : Les estimations relatives aux dépenses de programmes pour 2022-2023 et 2023-2024 sont fondées sur les taux de croissance des dépenses de programmes tirées du budget de l'Ontario de 2019.

Sources : *Comptes publics de l'Ontario*, budget de l'Ontario de 2019, *Perspectives économiques et revue financière de l'Ontario 2019* et BRF.

Incidence de la politique sur le Revenu (milliards de \$)



Source : BRF, *Perspectives financières et économique*, automne 2019, page 12.

*moyenne annuelle projetée

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The FAO treats the \$5 billion shortfall as budgetary warning to be noted. We recognize it as a political issue. We know that it means services are being sacrificed to tax cuts. We know that Ontario has more than enough wealth to pay for what we need. Anything else constitutes an avoidable crisis.

The good news is that not only are Ontarians offside with the Ford agenda, they are also able to effectively pressure the government to back down. Polling data continues to show that Ford's popularity is extremely low. Internal OSSTF/FEESO polling shows that about two-thirds of Ontarians support OSSTF/FEESO's efforts to push back against cuts to education. A similar portion of Ontarians are also willing to pay more in taxes to improve education funding.

The Ford government is becoming notorious for its policy and spending flip flops. OSSTF/FEESO will continue gathering, developing and sharing evidence about the negative impacts of the government's budget and policy decisions. It's up to our members and allies to keep up the political pressure. It's the only way push back against cuts and privatization.

Chris Samuel works as the Public Policy Analyst at OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office.

vii. Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, Economic and Budget Outlook: Assessing Ontario's Medium-Term Budget Plan (Fall 2019), 15–16.

/suite de la page 79

sur le revenu coûteront 4,2 milliards de dollars cette année et ensuite en moyenne 3,4 milliards de dollars pour chacune des quatre prochaines années. À la fin de 2023–2024, cela représente presque 18 milliards de dollars en perte de revenu!

De plus, le BRF prévoit, selon les projections et les annonces du gouvernement, que les revenus seront encore plus à la baisse en raison de réductions d'impôt. L'importance, la nature et les bénéficiaires exacts de ces réductions d'impôt n'ont jusqu'à présent pas été dévoilés, mais elles coûteront environ 2,3 milliards de dollars en 2021–2022 et atteindre 3,8 milliards de dollars d'ici 2023–2024. Cela entraînera des tensions budgétaires nouvelles et inutiles, qui seront utilisées pour justifier des coupures additionnelles aux programmes.

Ces chiffres peuvent sembler abstraits, alors plaçons-les dans le contexte des négociations actuelles. Si vous combinez les réductions de revenus attribuables aux décisions politiques pour 2019–2023 (les trois années de notre prochaine convention collective) aux réductions d'impôt qui n'ont toujours pas été annoncées pour la même période, vous obtenez une perte de revenus totale de 13,5 milliards de dollars. Ce sont des revenus que le gouvernement aurait pu recevoir, mais dont il a décidé de se priver. Le fait de maintenir les salaires d'OSSTF/FEESO au niveau de l'inflation pour la même période coûterait environ 200 millions de dollars. Cela signifie que le coût des augmentations inflationnistes à nos salaires représenterait environ 1,5 pour cent des revenus dont les conservateurs de Doug Ford se privent, surtout au profit de grandes sociétés et de personnes fortunées et aux dépens de l'environnement, des soutiens sociaux et de l'éducation publique.

Le Centre canadien de politiques

alternatives (CCAP) a fait un travail exceptionnel pour comparer la mesure à laquelle le gouvernement prévoit augmenter ses dépenses dans des secteurs qui constituent toujours une priorité pour les Ontariennes et les Ontariens (éducation, soins de santé, services sociaux) et combien le gouvernement compte dépenser sur les réductions d'impôt. Au cours des trois prochaines années, presque 60 pour cent de l'augmentation des dépenses ira aux réductions d'impôt, alors qu'un faible 2 pour cent ira à l'éducation^{vi}.

Cependant, ce n'est pas là le pire. Le tableau du CCAP montre des augmentations nominales aux dépenses. Cela signifie que ce sont des augmentations aux dépenses qui ne tiennent pas compte de l'inflation. De plus, ces chiffres ne tiennent pas compte de la croissance de la population. Puisque l'on prévoit une croissance de population de 5,3 pour cent et un taux d'inflation de 6,3 pour cent, les plans de dépenses du gouvernement affichent un trou béant de 5 milliards de dollars. Il s'agit d'une valeur de 5 milliards de dollars en éducation, en soins de santé et autres services que les Ontariennes et les Ontariens veulent, mais pour lesquels le gouvernement ne prévoit simplement rien au budget^{vii}. Rappelez-vous un des buts fondamentaux de ce gouvernement : sous-financer les services afin de créer des crises et ensuite utiliser ces crises pour des fins de privatisation et de coupures additionnelles.

Le BRF considère ce manque à gagner de 5 milliards de dollars comme un avertissement dont il faut tenir compte. Nous reconnaissons qu'il s'agit d'une question politique. Nous savons que des services seront sacrifiés pour donner lieu à des réductions d'impôts. Nous savons que l'Ontario a amplement de richesses pour subvenir à nos besoins. Toute autre action entraîne une crise inutile.

La bonne nouvelle, c'est que non seulement les Ontariennes et les Ontariens s'opposent au programme de Doug Ford, mais ils sont également en mesure de faire pression efficacement auprès du gouvernement pour qu'il fasse marche arrière. Les résultats de

- i. Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, "About," accessed January 13, 2020.
- ii. Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, Understanding Ontario's 2018-2019 Deficit (2019), 1.
- iii. Ministry of Finance, A Plan to Build Ontario Together: 2019 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, by Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance (2019), 5.
- iv. Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, Economic and Budget Outlook: Assessing Ontario's Medium-Term Budget Plan (Fall 2019) (2019), 10.
- v. Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, Understanding Ontario's 2018-2019 Deficit, 3.
- vi. Ricardo Tranjan, "It's all about tax cuts," CCPA: Behind the Numbers, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019.

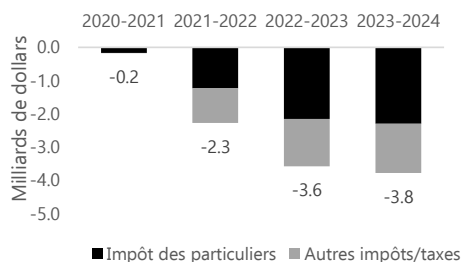
sondages continuent d'indiquer une très faible popularité pour Doug Ford. Les sondages internes d'OSSTF/FEESO montrent qu'environ les deux tiers des Ontariennes et des Ontariens appuient les efforts d'OSSTF/FEESO à se dresser contre les coupures en éducation. Une proportion semblable d'Ontariennes et d'Ontariens sont même prêts à payer plus d'impôts pour améliorer le financement de l'éducation.

Le gouvernement Ford est en train de se faire une triste réputation pour ses nombreux revirements en matière de politique et de dépenses. OSSTF/FEESO continuera de recueillir, d'élaborer et de partager des preuves sur les répercussions négatives des décisions du gouvernement en matière de budget et de politique. Il incombe à nos membres et à nos alliés de maintenir la pression politique. C'est la seule façon de se défendre contre les coupures et la privatisation.

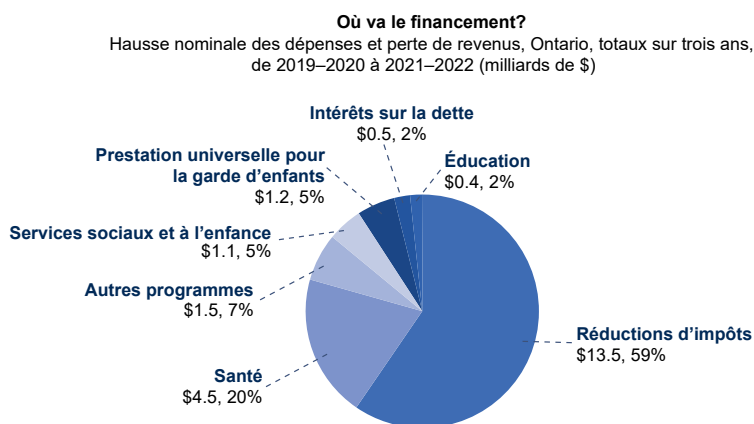
Chris Samuel œuvre à titre d'analyste des politiques publiques au Bureau provincial d'OSSTF/FEESO.

- i. Bureau de la responsabilité financière de l'Ontario, "À propos," accédé le 13 janvier 2020.
- ii. Bureau de la responsabilité financière de l'Ontario, Analyse du déficit 2018–2019 de l'Ontario (2019), 1.
- iii. Ministère des Finances, Un plan pour bâtir l'Ontario ensemble : Perspectives économiques et revue financière de l'Ontario 2019, par Rod Phillips, ministre des Finances (2019), 5.
- iv. Bureau de la responsabilité financière de l'Ontario, Perspectives économiques et budgétaires : évaluation du plan budgétaire à moyen terme de l'Ontario (automne 2019) (2019), 10.
- v. Bureau de la responsabilité financière de l'Ontario, Analyse du déficit 2018–2019 de l'Ontario, 3.
- vi. Ricardo Tranjan, "It's all about tax cuts," CCPA: Behind the Numbers, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2019.
- vii. Bureau de la responsabilité financière de l'Ontario, Perspectives économiques et budgétaires : évaluation du plan budgétaire à moyen terme de l'Ontario (automne 2019), 15–16.

Incidence sur les revenus des modifications non annoncées à la politique fiscale



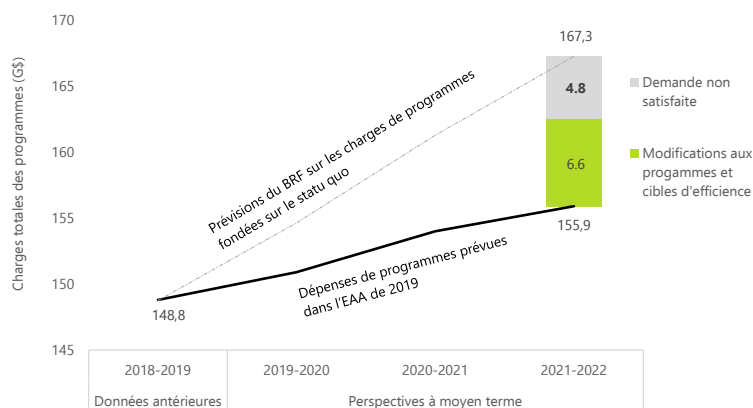
Source : BRF.



@ccpa

Source : Perspectives économiques et budgétaires du BRF, automne 2019; Perspectives économiques et revue financière de l'Ontario 2019; Budget de l'Ontario 2019; calculs par l'auteur

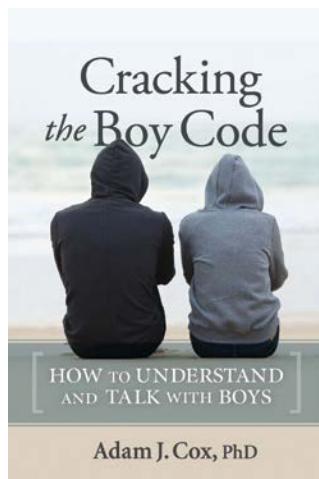
La demande de services publics dépassera les dépenses prévues du gouvernement de 4,8 milliards en 2021-2022



Source : Analyse par le BRF de données fournies par le Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor.

Top picks

Reviews



Cracking the Boy Code: How to Understand and Talk with Boys By Adam Cox

New Society Publishers (May 8, 2018)

163 pages, Paperback \$18.99; PDF \$12.35; EPUB \$12.35

Reviewed by Simon Banderob

In the opening chapters of *Cracking the Boy Code: How to Understand and Talk to Boys*, psychologist Adam Cox undermines his own premise. Is there a “Boy Code” at all? Structural differences between brains of boys and girls, Dr. Cox notes, are less distinct than differences in the brains among boys. However, this book discusses boys as if they are all similar to each other and no one else. Dr. Cox, as a rule, is more interested in talking to boys as they are than in understanding how boys become the way they are; readers who are looking for a theory on why boys may have different behaviour or cognition from girls for whatever reason are going to be disappointed.

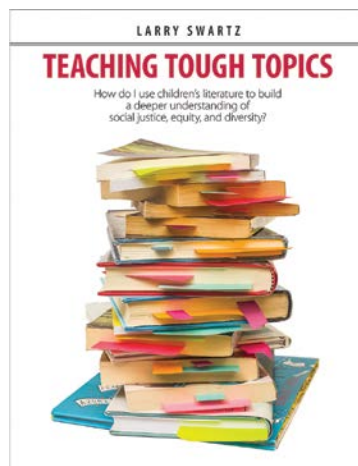
On his own account, Dr. Cox took inspiration from Ridley Scott’s *Gladiator*, where Russel Crowe’s character, General Maximus’ maxim is “Strength and honour” which became Dr. Cox’s catchphrase for greeting the boys he treated. This is the insight behind *Cracking the Boy Code*: Appeal to boys’ masculinity. Don’t make too much eye contact—

boys don’t like that, urges Dr. Cox. Never embarrass him. Treat him like he’s a little older than he is. Take him seriously.

This isn’t bad advice. Taking other people’s feelings seriously is a good idea. So is doing a project together. But what is not clear is why this is specifically good advice for boys. Girls and boys and nonbinary children all value the esteem of their peers, all want to be engaged in meaningful activity and none of them want to feel belittled by adults.

Anyone who wants advice on talking to boys should use this book cautiously. Dr. Cox’s ideas on gender are suspiciously unclarified. His descriptions of neurology are so oversimplified they are misleading. That said, his writing style is clear and concrete ideas are reiterated at the end of each chapter and there are numerous project ideas listed in the appendix. Dr. Cox sincerely cares for the boys he treats. But if you share his sincerity, consider looking beyond *Cracking the Boy Code*.

Simon Banderob is an occasional teacher in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge.



Teaching Tough Topics: How do I use children’s literature to build a deeper understanding of social justice, equity, and diversity?

By Larry Swartz

Pembroke Publishers

144 pages, Paperback \$24.95

Reviewed by Simon Banderob

Most adults can remember what the arrival of the mobile TV-VCR units into

their classroom meant. Something in the outside world was happening so important that it had to be seen immediately. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the launch of the Space Shuttle Challenger, the 11th of September terrorist attacks—curriculum and regular teaching was put on hold for news that was about to alter our world.

These interruptions are inevitable and prove that no classroom is sequestered from the world. And they raise difficult questions in the classroom that shout to be answered. In *Teaching Difficult Topics*, Larry Swartz recalls the news of the death of one of his grade 4 students, killed aboard Air India flight 182. Walking from the principal’s office to his classroom, Swartz thought about how his class would process the news. Swartz turned to Susan Varley’s picture book *Badger’s Parting Gifts*, which he took from the shelf, gathered his students on the carpet and they read. Later they wrote letters and drew pictures remembering their old classmate to be given to her parents. Swartz believes literature does not deliver us away from reality but trains us for it, gives us metaphors and examples for readers to live by.

Teaching Tough Topics is Swartz’s guide to preparing students for the inequities and pain they will endure beyond the classroom, or even within it, despite a teacher’s best efforts. In each chapter, covering topics including racism, disability, poverty, genocide, bullying and death, Swartz deals with his subject methodically. Each chapter includes a primer, a perspective from a guest author, sample lessons, accurate vocabulary, and a list of appropriate fiction and nonfiction books, for all ages.

Swartz has written a capable manual that teaches understanding tough topics and options for taking actions and imagining with students a more just and kind world. Swartz’s book is for the educator who is proactive and thoughtful about their students’ social and psychological needs.

Simon Banderob is an occasional teacher in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge.



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